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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**Turkey – EU Relations in the Shade of the  
Middle East:**

**‘The Arab Spring-Is it an inception of a  
rupture between Turkey and the West?’**

*Master's thesis*

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and describe the effects of the Middle East policies of Turkey and the European Union on mutual relations between the two actors with particular focus on the Arab Spring and its repercussions on regional stability and international relations. The key components of Turkey's foreign policy are analyzed from the perspectives of EU-Turkey relations and political stances of Turkey and the European Union towards the Middle East. Analysis of Turkey's and the EU's responses to the uprisings and their impact on the situation in the region is an important part of the study. The conclusions of this study confirm that the strategic cooperation between the EU and Turkey and the necessity of compensating each other's relative weaknesses in order to achieve similar foreign policy goals in the concerned region after the Arab Spring led to a rapprochement between the two actors. However, a direct influence of this rapprochement on the negotiation process regarding the future Turkish membership in the EU has not yet been observed.

## **Key words**

Turkey, the European Union, Turkey-EU relations, negotiation process, the Middle East, MENA, foreign politics, the Arab Spring...

## **Abstrakt**

Cílem této diplomové práce je popsat dopady zahraničních politik Turecka a Evropské unie směrem ke Střednímu východu na vzájemné vztahy obou aktérů. Zvláštním důraz je kladen na význam vlivu Arabského jara na stabilitu v tomto regionu a na mezinárodní vztahy obecně. Jednotlivé složky zahraniční politiky Turecka jsou zkoumány jak z pohledu vztahu Evropské unie k Turecku tak z pohledu vztahů Turecka a Evropské unie k zemím Středního východu. Důležitou součástí práce je analýza reakcí Turecka a Evropské unie na povstání, která zahájila Arabské jaro, a jejich dopadů na situaci v regionu. Výsledky této analýzy potvrzují, že strategická spolupráce EU a Turecka a potřeba vzájemné kompenzace relativních "slabin" za účelem dosažení podobných zahraničně-politických cílů v dotčeném regionu vedla ke sblížení obou aktérů v době po začátku Arabského jara. Vliv tohoto sblížení na vyjednávání ohledně budoucího členství Turecka v EU nicméně zatím nebyl pozorován.

## **Klíčová slova**

Turecko, Evropská unie, vzájemné vztahy Turecka a EU, vyjednávání, Střední východ, MENA, zahraniční politika, Arabské jaro...

## **Declaration of Authorship**

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, May 15, 2013

Elçin Sabahat KARANA

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## **Institute of International Studies**

### **Master thesis proposal**

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### **Proposed Topic:**

Turkey – EU Relations in the Shade of the Middle East: ‘The Arab Spring-Is it an inception of a rupture between Turkey and the West?’

### **Topic Characteristics:**

As a long-lasting European Union candidate country, Turkey is one of the most strategically located and powerful role model countries with its modern Islam perception in the Middle East. Its Middle East policy after the Arab Spring is more important than before not only for the region itself but also for the European Union. From the EU's perspective, the region provides a unique platform to facilitate mutual understanding and political dialogue to reduce tensions and provide security, whereas from the financial perspective it works for the regional economic integration, and protection of the environment. The main aim of this research is to explore the situation of Turkey-EU relations in the framework of the Middle East, to delve into the new order in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, and to analyze the impacts of cooperation between regional powers on regional and international politics.

## **Working hypotheses:**

1. Hypothesis: Turkey's further interest in its Middle East policy especially after the Justice and Development Party presidency will lead to a significant rapprochement between Turkey and the regional countries.
2. Hypothesis: This process is likely to influence Turkey's foreign policy towards the European Union.
3. Hypothesis: Turkey's new foreign policy decisions and rapprochement with the Middle East will affect European Union's perceptions about Turkey.
4. Hypothesis: The European Union will feel much stronger necessity of collaboration with Turkey after the Arab Spring.

## **Methodology:**

The research profoundly integrates different resources and takes an interdisciplinary approach. The subject matter of the research is studied by exploring and systematically analyzing a broad range of written, visual and online media resources and academic papers. An extensive content analysis is used by taking into account the general lack of detailed empirical data concerning this research of interest. In this framework, an inductive approach is used through the analysis of the collected qualitative data.

In order to explain the international issues related to Turkey-Middle East-EU triangle, political realism is selected as a school of thought in this research taking into account the most well-known approach of this theory that the world politics are driven by competitive self-interests of the states whose primary concern is survival.

As argued by the realist scholars like Machiavelli, Hobbes, Morgenthau and so many others the balance of power is the central mechanism for regulating conflict which is also the key issue in the Middle East as well as in between the Middle East and Europe today.



## Outline

Introduction

Methodology and Theory

Literature Review

1. Remodelling Turkish Foreign Policy under the rule of AKP government: to the West or to the East?
  - 1.1. Wavelike relations with the European Union
  - 1.2. Rapprochement with the Middle East
2. Policy stance of the European Union towards the Middle East, particularly of the selected EU Member States
  - 2.1. Germany
  - 2.2. France
  - 2.3. The United Kingdom
3. The Arab Spring and its regional repercussions
4. The Arab Spring and its multidimensional repercussions to Turkey and to the EU
  - 4.1. Turkey's Middle East perception after the Arab Spring: the End of Zero Problems with Neighbours Policy
  - 4.2. The European Union needs renovation in its Middle East policy
    - 4.2.1. Political Perspective: 'EU Development Cooperation'
    - 4.2.2. Economic perspective: 'The EU and the MENA'
5. Implications of the Arab Spring on EU-Turkey relations: Agreement or Disagreement?

Conclusion

Bibliography

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## Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	2
METHODOLOGY AND THE THEORY.....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	
1. REMODELING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE RULE OF AKP GOVERNMENT: 'TO THE WEST OR TO THE EAST'? .....	9
1.1 WAVELIKE RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION.....	13
1.2 RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE MIDDLE EAST.....	21
2. POLICY STANCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST: 'PARTICULARLY OF THE SELECTED EU MEMBER STATES'.....	28
2.1 GERMANY.....	33
2.2 FRANCE.....	36
2.3 THE UNITED KINGDOM.....	38
3. THE ARAB SPRING AND ITS REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS.....	40
4. THE ARAB SPRING AND ITS MULTIDIMENSIONAL REPERCUSSIONS TO TURKEY AND TO THE EU.....	47
4.1 TURKEY'S MIDDLE EAST PERCEPTION AFTER THE ARAB SPRING: THE END OF THE ZERO PROBLEMS WITH NEIGHBORS POLICY.....	48
4.2 THE EUROPEAN UNION NEEDS RENOVATION IN ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICY.....	52
4.2.1 POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE: 'EU DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION'.....	57
4.2.2 ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE: 'THE EU AND THE MENA'	60
5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARAB SPRING ON EU-TURKEY RELATIONS: 'COOPERATION OR COMPETITION'? .....	64
CONCLUSION.....	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	84

## **Introduction**

The importance of providing with stability, prosperity, peace, and democracy in and out of the country has dramatically increased during the Cold War and in the following decades as the most well-known internal and external policy goals. The world has been facing an irreversible foreign policy change. Well-known identifications of security conceptions, foreign policy attitudes and basically international relations have been restructuring. In this atmosphere, the Middle East and Northern Africa have been given special attention by the Western World because of not only strategic importance of these regions in terms of critical resources but also security and defense perceptions of them.

September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States (US) in 2001 and afterwards the counterattacks of the US to Afghanistan and Iraq have doubled up the significance of the region. As a matter of fact, the biggest impact of events was observed on Turkey as a regional country surrounded by these incidents. With its strategically unique geographic location between Europe, the Middle East and Asia, and also with its proximity to the strategic regions and energy recourses Turkey has always been one of the most eye catching centers of both the countries located in the close neighborhood and of the countries located in Europe.

Turkey's growing regional reputation in the Middle East and its diverging foreign policy decisions and above all the latest uprisings in all over the region have attracted the attention of the World much more strongly to the Middle East and particularly to Turkey. In the meantime, conversely, Turkey's relations with the European Union have started to lose its intensity both in the eyes of political elite

and public. This has derived not only from Turkey's internal or external policy decisions and their effects on these relations, but also the internal problems of the European Union such as the Euro crisis which has alienated the Union for a long while from the enlargement psychology without being directly related to Turkey. Indeed, this problematic period of relations has made much more interesting to study and analyze the effects and long-term results of the Arab Spring on Turkey-EU relations.

Nowadays it has been frequently questioned whether the shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy mentioned above and deteriorations in Turkey-EU relations will increase after the uprisings, which is named as the Arab Spring, in the Middle East or these events in the region will provide a rapprochement between Turkey and the European Union. Meanwhile the discussions have mostly focused on the topic that whether the new regimes in the Arab world would follow Turkey as a model or not, because in each case the European Union will most probably develop a different policy.

The situation today in the region is crucial not only for intra-regional stability but also for the security and good neighborly relations of the European countries. The repercussions of these changes are multidimensional. The consequences of this process for the long-term distribution of power within the region and for the patterns of alliances among the regional powers are likely to be spectacular, although it has not been clearly visible, yet.

In this context, the motivation of this thesis is to analyze Turkey-EU relations in terms of the Middle East policies of these international actors, particularly after the uprisings in the Arab world.

## **Methodology and the Theory**

The research profoundly integrates different resources and takes an inter-disciplinary approach. The subject matter of the research is studied by exploring and systematically analyzing a broad range of written, visual and online media resources and academic papers. An extensive content analysis is used by taking into account the general lack of detailed empirical data concerning this research of interest. In this framework, an inductive approach is used through the analysis of the collected qualitative data.

In order to explain the international issues related to Turkey-Middle East-EU triangle, political realism is selected as a school of thought in this research taking into account the most well-known approach of this theory that the world politics are driven by competitive self-interests of the states whose primary concern is survival.

As argued by the realist scholars like Machiavelli, Hobbes, Morgenthau and so many others the balance of power is the central mechanism for regulating conflict which is also the key issue in the Middle East as well as in between the Middle East and Europe today.

Moreover, when it is closely evaluated, it can be easily seen that Turkey has followed a realist foreign policy approach in the Middle East and tried to maximize Turkish national interests.

The main aim of this research is to explore the situation of Turkey-EU relations in the framework of the Middle East, to delve into the new order in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, and to analyze the impacts of cooperation

between regional powers on regional and international politics. In this general framework, in order to conduct this research, four hypotheses are formulated as followed;

- Turkey's further interest in its Middle East policy especially after the Justice and Development Party presidency will lead to a significant rapprochement between Turkey and the regional countries.
- This process is likely to influence Turkey's foreign policy towards the European Union.
- Turkey's new foreign policy decisions and rapprochement with the Middle East will affect European Union's perceptions about Turkey.
- The European Union will feel much stronger necessity of collaboration with Turkey after the Arab Spring.

In order to confirm these hypotheses, in the first chapter of the research, Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government will be evaluated in the period of 2002-2013. In this chapter, one of the most popular questions of current analyses related to Turkey will be addressed that if there is a shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy from being western oriented to being eastern oriented.

Additionally, under the two different subheadings of the first chapter, Turkey-EU relations and the current situation of the negotiation process, and also Turkey's rapprochement policies towards the Middle East will be scrutinized.

In the second chapter, the EU's foreign policy stance related to the Middle East will be analyzed and the emerging foreign policy interests from the

region, especially German, French and British ones, as the motive forces of the EU, will be shortly addressed.

In the third chapter, the Arab Spring and its regional repercussions will be discussed. Each country which is experiencing the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Morocco will be shortly studied. The main aim of this chapter is to have a general perception about the current situations of these countries after the uprisings, to have an idea regarding the impacts of their current situation on the regional and international relations, and additionally to see the effect of Turkish model in the newly established regimes.

In the fourth chapter, the multidimensional repercussions of the Arab Spring will be evaluated. In this context, first of all Turkey's response and foreign policy decisions related to the incidents of the region will be studied, and then the same points will be questioned for the European Union's Middle East policy.

In this framework, EU development cooperation policy and the changes or effects in the EU-MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region economic relations will be considered during the uprising process and afterwards.

And in the fifth chapter, a comparative analysis of the implications of the Arab Spring on Turkey-EU relations will be discussed and it will be addressed whether this process has created a cooperation or competition atmosphere between these two international actors.

Finally in the conclusion part, taking into account the whole data that are obtained and the analyses that are made, a general confirmation for the



hypotheses will be submitted. Additionally, some general predictions will be determined in the conclusion related to the near future of the Turkish foreign policy, the new order in the Middle East, its repercussions on Turkey-EU relations and on the accession negotiations.

## **Literature Review**

The events occurring in the Middle East and North Africa created an East-West diversification particularly after the Cold War and 9/11 attacks and its long term consequences have become less clear, whereas in the middle of this diversification the importance of Turkey has become much more obvious (Tocci, 2012; Protopapas, 2011; Cagaptay, Cornell, Lesser & Taspinar, 2011; Aydin, 2005). As a traditional, as well as modern Muslim country, Turkey has always performed like a role model for the regional countries standing on its cultural and historical roots with the Middle East. In fact, with its religion, history and geography, Turkey is a Middle Eastern country, thus any event in the Middle East directly affects Turkey (Aydin, 2005).

As it is evaluated by so many scholars in the international relations domain, like Ronald Linden and some others, Turkey is an important regional player as well as being an important partner of the Western world. Thus, Turkey-EU relations and foreign politics in general are mostly affected by Turkey's regional role and its relations with the regional countries, and similarly EU's decisions on Turkey, which were very disappointing currently, influence not only bilateral relations but also world politics (Linden et al., 2012; Cagaptay et al., 2011; Cakir et al., 2011). The reputation of Turkey has dramatically grown up currently also because of its transition process, the signals of which were first observed a

decade ago, reflecting a shift in foreign policy of Turkey from being western oriented to being eastern oriented (Tocci, 2012; Cagaptay et al. 2011).

Emerging alliances in between Turkey and the regional countries have been evaluated by some as a proof of this shifting policy of Turkey which might affect the Western world negatively; while by some it has been considered as an advantage of the European Union to renovate its policies towards the region with the help of close collaboration and consultation with Turkey during/after the Arab Spring which has contemporaneously emerged with Turkey's foreign policy alteration (Freudenstein, 2011).

The Arab Spring has its own weight beyond Turkey-EU relations, too. The previous director of one of the most well-known institutes of the European Union, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Álvaro de Vasconcelos (2012) is identifying the uprisings as the 'third democratic wave' affecting the whole periphery of old Europe. De Vasconcelos states that this democratic wave came in different phases like the fall of the dictatorships in Europe (Portugal, Greece, and Spain) in the 1970s, then in Latin America and Asia in the 1980s and 1990s, and finally in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. As a political uprising by masses demanding liberal democratic reform, Arab Spring has generated sweeping political change across the Arab world by following the previous phases.

The main conclusions of existing researches have so far focused either on the possible outcomes of the Arab Spring on foreign policy perceptions of the Western powers (Kaplan, 2012; Witney, 2012) or exclusively on the balance of power which will be established in the region after the Arab Spring (Barzegar, 2012) without looking at specific regional powers. Although the existing studies

provide valuable input for international relations, there has been still a gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive analysis of the events from a multidimensional perspective taking Turkey as a center of gravity and analyzing its relations with the European Union in the shadow of these events.

## **1. Remodeling Turkish Foreign Policy under the Rule of AKP Government: 'To the West or to the East'?**

The Turkish Republic was born into a strategic geography harboring so many challenges alongside of opportunities in and beyond its borders. Providing national security, territorial integrity and political stability not only for its citizens but also for the wider geography surrounding the country have always been the main goals -from time to time main challenges- of Turkey.

In only few decades after the foundation of the Republic, new policy goals/challenges attached to the previous ones. The economic development, stabilizing secure energy resources and becoming a regional power, lead Turkey to turn its face towards the Western modernization. On this path, not long after and not surprisingly, to be the part of European community was chosen as the main foreign policy aim.

In fact, as a movement, westernization dates back to the period of the Ottoman Empire with the objective of being adopted by the West through implementing western norms and adapting its modern technology and life style. Thus, the strategic vision consisting of the EU membership can be evaluated as historical and natural outcome of both the Ottoman westernization tendency and "the founding philosophy of the Republic and Atatürk's vision for the nation's integration into Modernity and Civilization" (Özcan, 2010).

When the Turkish foreign policy is being analyzed, these main pillars of foundation and policy goals should be kept in mind, because the policies followed until the 2000s were continuing in the same path. However, after 2000s although the main goals have not changed completely, the policies followed in order to achieve these goals have become multi-dimensional and from time to time confusing.

The foreign policy of the AKP government had set out on a 'zero problems with neighbors' policy, in fact by following the very well-known motto of Atatürk 'Peace at home. Peace in the World'. Through this policy it had been argued that Turkey would mediate between regional countries on conflicting issues. This main foreign policy perception and related initiatives did not create any question mark in the West, particularly in the European Union, at beginning.

On the contrary, it was faced with an appreciation in the West with the expectation of much powerful impetus in the Middle East for peace and stability. But, unfortunately, some policies conducted afterwards such as voting against sanctions on Iran at the United Nations have paved the way for increasing doubts in the West about an 'axis shift' in Turkey (Cornell, 2011).

Although it has been stated by the AKP government so many times that Turkey's Westernization perspective and membership desire towards the EU is a natural outcome of the centuries-long relations, common understandings and values with Europe such as democracy and respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, the policies conducted by the government has been consisting of so many controversies. There have been, of course, critically

important international incidents causing or requiring these new controversial and multi-dimensional policies.

In a dramatically shaken world order, witnessing the United States' intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan just after the 9/11 attacks, increasingly going on conflicts in the Middle East between Palestine and Israel, and long-lasting disappointments and complications in relations with the European Union, Turkey has started to experience an attempt to create a modern version of political Islam and Neo-Ottomanism in addition to its old pro-Western and pro-European perspectives (Cichocki, 2009).

Neo-Ottomanism discussions were spread in a rapid succession when its signals were largely given by the policy briefs of the AKP government, even though this ideology of promoting further engagement with the neighbors and with the areas once belonged to the Ottoman Empire was first mentioned by the 8<sup>th</sup> President of the Turkish Republic Turgut Özal.

According to Özal and his ideology Neo-Ottomanism or mostly called Özalism, *"(...) western civilisation was not the only civilisation on earth, and that Turkey did not have to choose between either the European, Turkish or Islamic civilizations (...) the Turks were European Muslims; therefore Turkey did not need to change its mentality or civilisational mode to be European"* (Laciner, 2009).

Taking its roots from this political thinking 'Neo-Ottomanism', the AKP government focused on softening the approach to secularism and solving the Kurdish problem through re-direction of its diplomacy, economy, cultural and historical roots during its first terms, but this ideology could only be active in the Middle East (Criss, 2010).

Meanwhile, the need to search for new export markets became a critical driver of Turkish foreign policy, which had also emerged in the 1980s when “*the economy had become transformed from a state-led and protected economy to an open economy with a growing manufacturing and service sector*” (Kirişci, 2006: 13). Under the ruling of Justice and Development Party (AKP) this tendency has made a dramatic ascent. Turkey’s turning face towards the Middle East should also be understood from this point of view (Barkey, 2011).

Additionally, the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) of the United States in the region, which was characterizing an alteration in the American policy through an active participation in promoting liberal democracy, market economies and educational reforms, provided an opportunity and also US support for Turkey to pursue a pro-active foreign policy (Bağcı & Sinkaya, 2007).

Nevertheless, bilateral relations between Turkey and the US had passed through a turbulent time when the Turkish National Grand Assembly rejected a decision that was anticipating opening the Turkish territory to the US forces to use it during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Ibid.).

In the framework of this general perspective, in this chapter of the research firstly, Turkey’s relations with the European Union will be scrutinized in the term of the AKP government. There is no doubt to state that the most prominent political improvements in Turkey-EU relations have been observed during the Justice and Development Party government’s tenure from 2002 to today.

The first and the most distinctive ones of these improvements is, without a doubt, the EU membership negotiation process of Turkey which was started in

2005. Keeping this in mind, AKP governments domestic policies will be analyzed in the framework of the EU norms and regulations.

After looking upon the wave like relations of Turkey and the EU, secondly, Turkey's rapprochement with the Middle East during the same process will be analyzed with the most featured policy decisions of Turkey towards the region such as connecting close economic relations with Syria (until the Arab Spring), Egypt and Saudi Arabia; strong support for Hamas; and on the contrary tightening relations with Israel.

### ***1.1. Wavelike relations with the European Union***

As an associate member of the European Community since 1963, Turkey applied for full membership to the European Union in 1987. In 1997 it was declared by the European Union as eligible to join the Union and just two years after that it became a candidate country in Helsinki European Council in 1999. Its accession negotiations with the European Union were started in 2005. But unfortunately, for the last few years Turkey-EU relations have almost come to a stopping point.

The reasons behind the situation are in a wide variety, such as Cyprus issue, French opposition and as well as Turkish foreign policy decisions against the everlasting negotiation process with the EU about the membership to the Union. Indeed, as described by Öniş (2008), Turkey-EU relations since 2000s, under the rule of AKP government should be analyzed in two different periods, the first of which covers the period of 2002-2005 (AKP's victory and start of accession negotiations) 'Golden Age of Europeanization', and the second of which is the post-2005 period.

During the first period, Turkey pursued its active policy towards the European Union that had started in 1999 through the candidate status of the country when the previous government (DSP-MHP-ANAP coalition) was governing the country. In the contrary, during the second term Turkey has lost its enthusiasm about joining the EU as a full member.

Since the beginning of negotiation process in 2005 Turkey has been expected to fully adopt the EU *acquis* to its own legal system. The process of negotiations consists of thirty five different fields range from free movement of goods, fisheries, energy, external relations to foreign, security and defense policy. In order to reach the Accession Treaty, as any other candidate country, each chapter has to be opened by the EU Council and provisionally closed which requires fulfillment of closing criteria.

If all the chapters are closed after the negotiation process, then the Accession Treaty is signed between the EU and the candidate state. But, of course the treaty has to be approved both by the EU Parliament and each of the member state in the Union prior to membership.

According to the latest data of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry for EU Affairs (see the official web pages); only one negotiation chapter '(25) Science and Research' has opened and provisionally closed, and twelve chapters have opened '(4) Free Movement of Capital, (6) Company Law, (7) Intellectual Property Law, (10) Information Society and Media, (16) Taxation, (18) Statistics, (20) Enterprise and Industrial Policy, (21) Trans-European Networks, (27) Environment, (28) Consumer and Health Protection, (32) Financial Control, (12) Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy'; but have not closed, yet.



On the other hand, eight chapters which are '(1) Free Movement of Goods, (3) Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, (9) Financial Services, (11) Agriculture and Rural Development, (13) Fisheries, (14) Transport Policy, (29) Customs Union, and (30) External Relations' cannot be opened because of the EU Council decision in 2006 (see Council decision 2006/35/EC).

This decision requires a fully implementation of the Additional Protocol of the Ankara Agreement (1963 / 1970) to all EU Member States including Cyprus, and Turkey has not undertaken its obligations stemming from this protocol in its entirety. Briefly, it necessitates Turkey to open its ports to Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus as required by the Customs Union with the EU.

Moreover, ten chapters '(2) Freedom of Movement for Workers, (11-F) Agriculture and Rural Development, (15) Energy, (17-F) Economic and Monetary Policy, (22-F) Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, (23) Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, (24) Justice, Freedom and Security, (26) Education and Culture, (31) Foreign, Security and Defense Policy, (33-F) Financial and Budgetary Provisions, and (34-F) Institutions' have been blocked for political reasons by Cyprus, France, Germany and Austria. In this group German and Austria have explicitly refused to open the chapter related to free movement, France has refused to open five chapters (which are marked by "F") for the reason that the opening of these chapters would imply a commitment to accession, and the rest have been refused to be opened by Cyprus (Insel, 2012).

Throughout 2011 the accession negotiations with the European Union continued very slowly without opening a new chapter. This process of stalemate brought about negative criticisms in different political and social groups in Turkey.

*“Earlier in November 2011, EU Minister Bağış had suggested that Turkey would not lose anything if no additional chapters of the aquis were to be opened during the Cypriot Presidency” (Morelli, 2013: 9).*

In 2012, taking into account the existing stalemate in relations and Turkey's decision on freezing the relations during Cyprus's presidency in the second half of the year, the European Union came with a new initiative called as 'positive agenda'. It was aimed with this initiative to bring new dynamics to the relations and to keep the accession process of Turkey alive and to give and impetus to them after a period of stagnation (see Europa Press Releases, 2012, MEMO/12/359).

In the framework of the initiative it has been decided to set up working groups that will work making progress in the accession process particularly related to the eight chapters which cannot be opened because of the Ankara Agreement and its additional protocol. The new initiative has evaluated from different perspectives by different group of scholars. For instance, for some it has the meaning of informal accession negotiation and for the others, particularly for EU skeptics, it has been something short of full EU membership (Morelli, 2013).

In the same period, the governmental bodies particularly the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted a comprehensive political and economic transformation of Turkey in addition to the realization of highest norms and standards in the fields of democracy, the rule of law and human rights (see web page Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Republic of Turkey).

However, 2012 Progress Report for Turkey, which has been published by the European Commission, has shown that Turkey has still long way to go.

Moreover according to Eralp (2012) the criticisms in the last Progress Report published by the EU Commission have been the harshest since the beginning of 2000s (Eralp, 2012). The very-well expected result of it has been the weakening pro-EU coalition in Turkey on the grounds of cultural and political gridlock.

Meanwhile, in terms of the EU's neighborhood policy towards the southern and south eastern neighbors, Turkey as a Mediterranean and Middle Eastern country has taken an active role, since it is almost impossible to stay out of the regional initiatives. In this context, in a connection with the European Union, Turkey has been a member of the Barcelona Process since 1995.

Nevertheless, Turkey was reluctant to follow active policy in the region considering its long-term membership goals. During the first years, *"Turkish diplomats feared that a stronger involvement in Euro-Mediterranean affairs could reinforce the arguments of those proposing Turkey should have strong ties with the EU but without full membership"* (Lecha, 2009: 43).

Indeed, these doubts did not build on sand, because the Barcelona Process and the following neighborhood policy of the EU were predicting a closer collaboration and a privileged relationship between the regional countries and the EU without a perspective of membership. In this context, in 2007 when the France came up with the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) idea, Turkish politicians and diplomats took a strict political stance against it, since it was argued to be an alternative to Turkey's full membership to the European Union.

The main reason behind the discomfort of Turkey towards this initiative was *"the fact that UfM (was) the brainchild of Sarkozy, who (was) vocal about opposition to Turkey's EU membership and whether Sarkozy's ulterior motive was*

*to keep Turkey out of the EU by offering the backbone of the UfM instead'* (Ozturk Erdem, 2011).

When some opposition increased also among the EU member countries itself such as Germany; France had to step back, and some structural changes were made in the UfM's declaration. After getting confirmation that the UfM would not be an alternative to Turkish membership in the EU, Turkey has joined the Union for Mediterranean.

When the fluctuating Turkey-EU relations have been analyzed, it is also worth to mention the Lisbon Treaty and its impact on Turkey's possible membership. Although the main purpose is to make the EU more democratic, more efficient and better able to address global problems, it has mainly changed the structure of the institutional hegemony in the Union by mostly focusing on voting system and rules (Karana, 2013).

According to Cichocki (2009), this treaty will make the membership possibility much more difficult for Turkey, because when it becomes a member the Treaty is going to allow Turkey an equal access to EU institutions in the decision-making process by the double majority mechanism. With the population of 75 million, Turkey might have become one of the main powerful actors in decision making mechanism as part of the population criterion in voting system.

Therefore, it would have made Turkey an equivalent partner to the biggest EU member states like Germany. There is no doubt that this does not seem a desirable scene in the European Union taking into account the current attitude of the powerful EU member countries.

However, as it is pointed out by Insel (2012) France, during the presidency of François Hollande, quite the contrary of Nicholas Sarkozy, can play a different role in accession negotiations with Turkey and this can bring about a lasting normalization of relations.

French Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius's explanations about French positive stance towards resuming on the accession negotiations, and first of all starting with the chapter of (22) Regional Policy have demonstrating this expectation on normalization of relations. Nevertheless, it is too early to predict the normalization and improvement in the relations of Turkey and the European Union after a couple of years-stalemate.

Obviously, whole this process should not be evaluated from one side's perspective only. There are also mistakes done by the European Union. As emphasized by Cornell (2011), *"since Turkey began negotiating for EU accession in 2005, opposition to its membership has not only grown in Europe, but also become ever more clearly articulated in terms of Turkey's identity rather than its performance: centering, that is, on the question of whether the country is in fact at all European"*.

This attitude towards Turkey triggered the negative feelings emerging in the Turkish society related to polarization between the West and the East. It has been pointed out by Taspinar (2011) that this alienation may somehow create 'Turkish Gaullism' through an exclusively Islamist, nationalist, independent, self-confident foreign policy and this may pave the way for a total pull out from the European or in general Western cooperation and collaboration initiatives as well as organizations.

Meantime, the global financial crisis was dramatically experienced in the European Union. It reduced the European market which considerably affected both internal and external relations of the Union. Turkey-EU commercial relations were affected by this crisis and subsequently weakened, and so this situation was accompanied by an intensified economic cooperation with the Middle Eastern countries (Cichocki, 2009).

Although in between these regions Turkey has tried to form a bridge in terms of economic and political relations possessing historical and cultural ties both with Europe and the Middle East. For example, before 2011 the trade volume in between the European Union and Turkey was around 17 billion USD. It was covering almost half of Turkey's whole foreign trade. However since 2011 Turkey's neighborhood has taken the leadership among foreign trade partners of Turkey and trade volume between Turkey and its neighborhood has dramatically increased reaching around 82 billion USD (Kirişci, 2012).

Without a doubt, whole this wave like relations with the EU and long-lasting disappointment emerging from the EU's reluctance towards Turkey's accession has created an alienation and loss of enthusiasm among Turkish society about the EU membership.

This situation was stated by Turkish President Abdullah Gül in May 2011 that the Turkish people may say "no" to the EU membership because of that dramatic slowdown in relations (Fabry, 2013).

Meanwhile the Arab Spring has erupted in the neighborhood of both Turkey and the European Union, which has been expected to affect the negotiation and accession process. Since, as far as the political geography is

concerned, it is not surprising that with its religion, history and geography, Turkey is a Middle Eastern country, thus any event occurring in the Middle East directly affects Turkey (Aydin, 2005).

### ***1.2. Rapprochement with the Middle East***

Nowadays, it has been mostly argued by international studies' scholars that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly under the rule of the AKP government, Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East reflects a "Neo-Ottoman" tendency. It means a more activist policy in foreign relations, and also much more political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural influence in the region where Turkey has strategic and national interests (Criss, 2010; Cagaptay, 2009; Taspinar, 2008). When Turkey's increasing attention towards the Middle Eastern and Northern African countries during the AKP government is taken into account, it is highly likely to get this impression.

As a country located at the very center of the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf square, Turkey reflects a multi cultural and multi ethnic structure. Its politically strategic location in between Europe and Asia, as well as its critical proximity to political conflicts occurring in the neighborhood leave Turkey no choice but to follow its policies much more cautiously in foreign politics.

With this point of view, Turkey had pursued its relations with the Middle Eastern and Northern African countries in a limited and passive perspective until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is worth to state that during the Cold War and a long time even afterwards Turkey was in a struggle for getting an acceptance from the Western world as an international, western, modern, and above all a 'European' country.

With this foreign policy goal, especially during the Cold War years relations with the neighbors in the Middle East were mostly ignored, and as mentioned above the contacts with the regional countries remained at a minimum level despite the historical and geographical connection with the region.

It is very well summarized by Arı and Piriñçi (2010: 1) that; “(...) the West and/or Westernization had been basic policy orientation for Turkey in terms of security and political considerations, (...) the security situation stemmed from the structure of international system imposed Turkey to take the Western consideration in dealing the problems in the Middle East”.

After the end of the Cold War, when the perceptions about Soviet threat were eliminated Turkey started to engage in regional politics and this trend continued in the following years, however desires for being a member of the Western society and especially being a part of the European Union had always been preponderant.

There is no doubt that Turkey is an important role model with its moderate Islam perception in the Middle East, and a desirable partner for the countries in the region with its rapidly developing economy (Tocci, 2012; Protopapas, 2011; Cagaptay, Cornell, Lesser & Taspinar, 2011).

Over and above Turkey shares a common cultural, religious and historical heritage with the regional countries which strengthen its leading role as a model symbolizing the importance of common values. The domination of the Ottoman Empire, which governed a good deal of Arab land for more than four centuries, has played a significant role in forming these common values.



It can be said that, the remarkable changes in foreign policy of Turkey towards the Middle East started at the end of 90s, especially during the Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem's tenure (Bolat, 2012). In this period significant initiatives were embarked on especially in Palestine-Israel issue, as well as in relations with Syria.

However, when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey, this involvement started to increase dramatically. Since the first day of its authority in the country, the AKP government has based its foreign policy stance on regional stability, national unity and territorial integrity (Arı & Pirinççi, 2010). At the beginning, these foreign policy goals were not astonishing at all, because they had been addressed several times by previous governments since the foundation of the Republic.

Nevertheless, following rapprochement with the Middle Eastern countries, besides the unprecedented foreign policy self confidence of Turkey has suddenly attracted attention of the World to Turkey and to its regional growth. Before focusing on its deeply rooted reasons, it is worth to state that one of the main concerns of the Western world was the AKP government's Islamic structure despite that fact that it was called as moderate Islam.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (2008) was stating this transition as a positive foreign policy development in every platform through making a foreign policy analysis and he was explaining the reasons behind Turkey's further involvement in foreign policy issues especially in the Eastern neighborhood as following:

*“After the end of Cold War in the early 1990s, a new notion of Turkey emerged as a bridge country (...) Turkey maintained its stability amid the chaos that engulfed many of its near neighbors and the international community began to look to Turkey as an island of stability and a bridge country between east and west (...) In terms of geography, Turkey occupies a unique space.*

*As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia’s vast landmass, it may be denied as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character. Like Russia, Germany, Iran, and Egypt, Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region. Turkey’s diverse regional composition lends it the capability of maneuvering in several regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environs.”*

With these above mentioned facts and understanding, foreign policy decisions of Turkey have never been taken alone on the basis of internal situations or political attitudes of elected power in Turkey. Balance of power in the World politics, and security and stability in regional politics have gradually affected decision making mechanism in Turkey.

Due to the fact that, as stated by Taspinar (2008), after the 9/11 attacks, the United States paid further importance to Turkey’s domestic and foreign policy orientation and tended to present Turkey as a role model for the Islamic world. Thus, since taking over the authority, AKP government’s foreign policy has been based on the concept of ‘strategic depth’.

This policy stance has implied the necessity of redefinition of Turkey’s strategic depth from the perspective of connections with the neighbors and the

continent in general. It has also required a reevaluation of the geo-economic and geo-cultural dimensions of the parameters of foreign policy in a comprehensive manner.

As stated by Joshua W. Walker (2007: 34), *"Beyond the academic discussions surrounding Turkey's potential and place in the world, Strategic Depth advocates seeking to counterbalance Turkey's dependencies on the West by courting multiple alliances to maintain the balance of power in its region"*.

Basically, he argues that according to the strategic depth policy Turkey should actively seek ways to balance its relationships and alliances without depending upon any one actor, which will prove Turkey with independence and leverage on the global and regional stage.

As a reflection of the strategic depth concept and its pillar 'zero problems with neighbors' policy, between the years 2002 and 2010 Turkey maintained close relations with the neighbors in the Middle East and Northern Africa. For instance, just after the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections, official representatives of Hamas were invited to Turkey in order to seek ways of mediation between Hamas and Israel, which has created a shock effect in Israel and also in some Western countries (Taspinar, 2008).

Meanwhile Turkey-Syria relations were improved in the fields of economy and regional relations. Turkey sought new investment opportunities in Syria and in this framework a Free Trade Agreement was signed between two countries in 2007 and visa regime was abolished opening doors to visitors from both sides in 2009. Moreover, Turkey mediated peace talks between Syria and Israel in 2008.

Although this collaboration process looked like serving to improve bilateral relations, one of the main reasons behind was Turkey's growing unrest related to the American support to Iraqi Kurds in order to stabilize Iraq but no support to Turkey in order to fight against PKK terrorism (Arı & Pirinççi, 2010).

In fact, this hidden political reaction has one more time proved the reality that in international relations, no matter if it is a state or an international organization; an actor has usually behaved according to the national or supranational interests.

Another improvement was observed in Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations during these years. For the first time in the forty years history of relations, King Abdullah's visit to Turkey in 2006 added a new dimension to the economic and diplomatic relations (Taspinar, 2008).

Similarly, Turkey-Egypt rapprochement has been mostly described as a 'regional alliance' during the AKP government. First of all, a free trade agreement was signed in 2005, which has increased the trade exchange between Turkey and Egypt. Furthermore the 'Memorandum for a Framework for Turkish-Egyptian Strategic Dialogue' was signed in 2007 (Taha, 2012).

As a result of these growing economic relations between Turkey and regional countries the "Close Neighbors Economic and Trade Association Council" was established by Turkey together with Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The aim of this Council has been to establish a free trade area among these countries (Üstün, 2012). Meanwhile, Turkey has started to play an active role in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has been elected as the

9th Secretary General by the 31<sup>st</sup> Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in 2005.

Above mentioned improvements in regional relations caused new discussions about Turkey's global role and its shifting nature from a Western geo-strategic military deterrent to an exemplary model of a Muslim-majority, secular, and democratic nation (Walker, 2007). However, this rapprochement process has not only been emerged by shifting Turkish policies.

Simultaneously, regional actors, *“especially Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq realized that cooperation through bilateral and multilateral channels would serve best on behalf of their interests”* (Arı & Pirinççi, 2010: 7).

Briefly, although with the new attitude of AKP government in foreign politics Turkey has reflected a shift towards the East than the West, and its role has evolved from being a bridge between West and East to being a role model in the Middle East maintaining productive relations in the region; this stance has been interrupted by the Arab Spring.

## **2. Policy Stance of the European Union towards the Middle East: 'Particularly of the Selected EU Member States'**

The main goal of the European Union, since the beginning, has been to protect peace and stability in Europe and to prevent any social, economic or safety related threat to its presence and order as much as possible. Especially after the end of the Cold War, when the obvious threat perception stemming from the Soviet Union was eliminated, this goal has mainly focused on the neighboring regions in the south and southeast which means into the Middle East and North Africa.

From this point of view, stability, economic prosperity, security and social conditions in these regions have become critically important. Therefore, the Mediterranean region has always been one of the priorities of the European Union regarding regional cooperation, trade liberalization through bilateral association agreements, possibilities of diverging dynamics of southern Mediterranean countries with European norms, and regional economic and social gap (Lecha, 2011).

The EU's relations with the countries of the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East have been developed through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED) which can be identified as a regional forum for political, economic and social cooperation.

It was established by the Barcelona Declaration in 1995 and the main goal of the partnership was announced as to create a shared zone of security, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean. With the aim of providing these main

goals, in three main fields a cooperation framework (Malmvig, 2006) was established which were;

- Political and security cooperation, which was based on fundamental principles of human rights and democracy.
- Economic cooperation, which was accompanied by substantial financial support from the EU structural reforms.
- Social and cultural cooperation, which was based on development of an active and pluralistic civil society.

But unfortunately the policies followed by the EU in the framework of the Barcelona Process and the discourse used by it, were almost completely different than each other. For instance, while the regional countries were invited by the EU to cooperate and move together towards the common security threats such as terrorism and radical Islam; the economic system and unstable political structures of these countries were defined as the security challenges by the EU (Ibid.).

When the obstacles and problems started to be more visible in the system, a new initiative was introduced to the international society in 2004. It was argued by the EU that the partnership goals were solidified with this new initiative 'the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)' engaging countries along its periphery (Czekaj, 2011). It was supposed to bring a new impetus to the relations in the south and south east whereas combining different neighborhood policies from the east and from the south of the Union.

The policy has based on four dimensions which are 'political and security dialogue; economic and financial partnership; social, cultural and human

partnership; and migration' (Akşit & Üstün, 2009). In this framework, in order to realize four dimensions; reinforcement of security through defining a common peace and stability area, establishment of a free-trade area thorough making financial cooperation and rapprochement among cultures through encouraging cultural and social exchanges between societies have been chosen as main policy goals.

Meanwhile, the region has been supported by the development cooperation of the European Union, funds of which are provided by the EU budget and the European Development Fund. The tasks of the development cooperation include the following fields (Bonk, Kerl & Zach, 2007);

- Long-term bilateral cooperation with local governments through direct budget support,
- Multilateral development cooperation through financial contributions to international organization,
- Co-financing of non-governmental organizations within and outside the EU,
- Short-term humanitarian aid.

However, for the last few years especially after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States, the EU's confusing policies towards the Middle East have frequently been criticized. It has been argued that the EU has not clear policies towards the region.

For instance; *"In the recent Iraq war, while some EU members, most notably Britain, joined the coalition forces led by the United States (US), other EU*



*members such as Germany and France preferred not to involve in the war” (Dagci, 2007).*

From the perspective of Barcelona Process and the Neighborhood Policy, the EU was increasingly facing oppositions by policy makers in the meantime because of failing to be effective or capable to react to the events in the region, ambiguity of the action plans and limited funding allocation for promotion of human rights and democracy (Akşit & Üstün, 2009).

One of the main criticisms was based on double standard claims which were arguing that while the European Union was providing a liberal democracy in its own borders defining common interests and values, the same common understanding and expectation was not pursued for the neighborhood.

Therefore *“instead of an equal partnership between two distinct blocs of states, what emerged was a ‘hub and spokes’ arrangement between the EU on the one hand and individual MPCs (Mediterranean Partner Countries) on the other, with the EU setting the pace and the southern states responding bilaterally”* (Hollis, 2012: 83).

Above all these criticisms, the biggest obstacle in front of a properly functioning mechanism was that *“despite the fact that democracy and human rights are part of the very aquis of the Barcelona Process, the EU has in practice often chosen immediate security concerns and strategic stability over concerns for democracy and human rights”* (Malmvig, 2006: 343). In order to eliminate these criticisms, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was launched in 2008 which consists of 27 EU member countries together with Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

With the UfM, the European Union and Northern African countries jointly undertook some commercial projects in the fields of transport, energy and environment. Although, as a new strengthened initiative, the UfM has aimed to enhance multilateral relations, to carry out more concrete projects and also to make the process more visible for citizens, the critics have continued owing to the same reasons mentioned above.

Hollis (Ibid.: 81) has been criticizing this general EU stance towards the Middle East with these words; *“For over two decades the EU has been promoting and justifying its policies on the grounds that they will help create ‘shared prosperity’ and more jobs for all the countries of the Mediterranean. Yet persistent and gross disparities in wealth and high unemployment were among the grievances that triggered the Arab revolts in 2010–11. And, while declaring its commitment to promoting human rights and democracy, by its actions the EU has favored regimes and practices that ultimately proved intolerable to a broad stratum of Arab society”*.

Beyond the political and economic policy stance of the European Union towards the Arab world, its attitude towards Islam is also worth to be analyzed due to the growing tendency by many Europeans for Muslims which is affecting the general decision making processes of the European Union. As it is pointed out by De Vasconcelos (2012), this attitude creates an anti-Islamic xenophobia and a rejection of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries and unfortunately it is a

handicap for European foreign policy because it damages the soft power of the EU.

Foreign and security policy decisions in the European Union are taken by unanimity which means that all member states have equal power in decision-making mechanism. But of course in reality the system does not function that equally. Especially in today's power oriented relationships are considered, it might be easily commented that the economic, political, military, and diplomatic capacity of a member state plays an important role in decision-making mechanism and it mostly determines its influence in the EU (Lehne, 2012).

Thus, we can say without a doubt that the biggest powers of the European Union, who are leading the internal and external policies, Germany, France and the United Kingdom have attracted much more attention than the other member countries in terms of the Union's foreign policy decisions about the Middle East. *"Their involvement in the most important forums of multilateral diplomacy and their comprehensive approach gives the Big Three enormous influence in shaping the EU's foreign policy decisions"* (Ibid.). Therefore, under the following subheadings these three countries' foreign policy approaches towards the Middle East will be analyzed with the main topics.

## **2.1. Germany**

It is a well-known fact that not only with its economic potential but also with its political force, Germany is one of the most important driving forces in the European Union. The influence of Germany was always obvious in the Union, however, it has become much more visible in 2000s through the turbulences

occurred in the World, particularly in Europe, such as financial crises, security concerns related to international terrorism and particularly the processes starting with the war in Iraq in 2003.

Just following the war in Iraq in 2003, Angela Merkel took the office as German Chancellor in 2005. With this term, it was expected that Germany-US relationships and partnership (if necessary) would be improved in order to efface the criticisms directed to Germany during the invasion of Iraq because of its opposition, which had also directly affected the EU.

As expected, Germany has started to follow a further multilateral policy about the Middle East especially about the Israeli-Palestinian dispute by supporting the engagement of the leaders of Syria and Iran in the process in order to initiate a region-wide effort as it has been also doing the same about the future status of Iraq (Belkin, 2009).

When general stance of Germany toward the Middle East is observed, firstly, it should be said that since the beginning of 2000s Germany has supported a much more effective and stronger EU role in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), and has actively contributed to EU missions in Palestinian territories and Gaza Strip (Mueller, 2007).

Additionally, it has been supporting a comprehensive cooperation framework between the EU and the regional countries with the concern that economic or political problems in the region might cause turbulences and soft security threats, and might trigger the historical frictions, and thus Germany might be affected by these frictions even if indirectly.

Similarly, EU-MENA relations have also started to be backed by Germany since the 2000s, as opposite to German attitude in 1995 and 1996 when the Barcelona Process was launched. For instance, at the end of 1990s “Germany actively contributed to European efforts which aimed at the creation of an Euro-Mediterranean area of peace and stability” (Ibid.: 9).

Relationships with Israel have traditionally been at the centre of Germany's foreign policy toward the MENA region. Although it is mostly argued that Germany always tackles the issue with an objective understanding (Grohe, Moosbauer, Perthes & Sterzing, 2002), there is a main German benefit of a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Germany has a sense of moral responsibility about Israel due to the mass murder of European Jews in the Second World War, thus, the recognition of Israel's inviolable right to exist became a core principle of German foreign policy (Overhaus, 2002).

Providing peace between two sides is important for Germany, not only to eliminate fear of a conflict in its relations with Israel, but also to pursue its good relations with the Arab states. In this context, it provides financial assistance to Palestine more than any other European country as well as providing economic and technical aid to Israel, but it also stipulates some conditions in return such as being a democratic state, respect to human rights and cooperate peacefully with its neighbors (Grohe, Moosbauer, Perthes & Sterzing, 2002).

Thus, German foreign policy perception regarding the Middle East depends on to prevent Arab-Israeli conflict and in general insecurity spillovers such as illegal migration, proliferation of WMDs or radical movements from the

MENA region to Europe and its immediate neighborhood with the cooperation of the EU and also to protect German commercial interests in the region.

When trade with the Middle East and North Africa has been considered, it may be stated that Germany is one of the main trading partners of the regional countries, even though from Germany's side economic interests have been modest except for Libya and Algeria which are Germany's main oil suppliers and Israel with which Germany makes one fifth of its whole exports to the region (Perthes, 2002).

In a nutshell, besides the EU general policy towards the Middle East, Germany puts considerable attention to the events in the region. Therefore, the uprisings in the Arab World have been closely observed by Germany since the beginning of events, because any event triggering hostility between Arabs and Israelis will most probably have impacts on Germany's interests.

## **2.2. France**

France is also a significant driving force of the European Union in terms of the foreign policy stance of the Union in addition to the domestic policy decisions about the Union itself. As for France, the Middle East and North Africa, particularly Algeria, Syria and Lebanon have crucial importance because of its geographical proximity and historical-colonial ties with these countries.

When the improvements regarding France and its influence in the EU foreign policy in 2000s are scrutinized as done for Germany, it can be said that Nicolas Sarkozy's Presidency in 2007-2012 has been of utmost importance. In his term Sarkozy had aimed "to increase France's influence and promote French

interests in the Middle East, by strengthening the European Union's global role and by advancing initiatives such as the Common European Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP)" and the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) (Hershco, 2008: 1).

Although in Sarkozy's term France strongly supported further role of the EU in the Middle East, its own foreign policy stance towards the Middle East did not present bigger differences than before. As observed in the past, strong economic engagement was prolonged in Libya, Iraq, Syria, North Africa, the Gulf countries and Egypt, with mediation efforts in Lebanon, and meetings with Israeli and Palestinians leaders (Ibid.). About financial issues, France has always been the biggest investor in North Africa and particularly in Morocco, as well as being by far the biggest aid donor (Witney & Dworkin, 2012).

As pointed out by Hershco, the biggest difference was the civilian nuclear cooperation offer for Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco in order to deepen relations with the regional countries and also prevent any security threat which could have emerged from the region. Union for Mediterranean idea had also been created to deal with the issues such as counter-terrorism, immigration, energy, trade, water and sustainable development in 2008.

Additionally, in Arab-Israeli conflict, France has explicitly supported Palestinian authorities, which made a pick during the Yasser Arafat's tenure (Hershco, 2005), but after Arafat's demise and increasing evidences of the US-Israel alliance forced France to follow much more neutral policy.

In this context, French foreign policy devoted to the region stresses that the active diplomacy against terror and weapons of mass destruction should be the main tool for solving problems (Lakomy, 2012; Hershco, 2005). French resistance before the US invasion of Iraq was actually a clear example of this attitude. In this case, France had not taken part in the coalition group structured against Iraq in 2003.

In fact, until the Arab Spring, France-Middle East relations had also depended on personal relations with the Arab dictators, beyond a strong support for more powerful and active role of the European Union in the region, which caused a political complication and dilemma for France in reacting to the events at the beginning (Lakomy, 2012).

As many countries have experienced, these uprisings created contradictions for France, such as unpredictable results of the events, security threats stemming from general instability, migration possibility and deterioration of economic relations.

### ***2.3. The United Kingdom***

Another powerhouse of the European Union is without a doubt is the United Kingdom since the beginning of its membership. Even though the UK is geographically located furthest from the Middle East when compared to Germany or France, it shares the same historical and colonial ties with the region as in the case of France, and the same economy and security oriented interests with both Germany and France regarding the Middle East.



However, the UK has followed diverging policies from Germany and France, and has tried to lead the European Union in its foreign policy decisions through its own perspectives. For instance, by differentiating from Germany and France, the UK had followed different policies regarding the invasion of Iraq, and strictly supported the US in her decisions. Meanwhile, it had followed an active policy as a 'bridge' between the US and the EU regarding the Middle East issues.

Similarly, contrary to German and French positive approach to more active EU presence in the Middle East, the UK prefers a much more conservative and limited EU in the region, because it is argued that a greater EU engagement in the region especially through the energy policies, development and improvement of oil production might enhance European stakes in the region, for instance in Iraq, while challenging the interests of the UK (Hofmann, 2010).

In terms of Arab-Israeli conflict, as an extension of maintaining the best possible relations with existing regimes because of its closer economic and historical relations, the UK has pursued its relations with Israel at limited level. In this perspective, "Israel tends to be viewed as a cause of instability and anti-Western feeling in the Arab world" (Rynhold, 2005).

Briefly, the main expectations of the UK from the region is to maintain the flow of oil, to combat radical terror, to provide security and stability in the Middle East, and as much as possible to prevent any prospective threat emerging from the region towards its own territory or citizens (Ibid.). Thus, the Arab Spring has created uncertain reactions also in the UK at the beginning. As a first step, economic sanctions were demanded, the assets were decided to be frozen, and a NATO coordinated operation in Libya was strongly supported (Michou, 2012).

### 3. The Arab Spring and Its Regional Repercussions

The Arab Spring, as a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests in the Arab World, has been mostly described as a turning point in regional stability and balance of power of the Middle East and North Africa. Because before the aforementioned events the regional order had been provided through the well-known players, although they were dictators for almost a half century or more, while the future state structures and general regional order have been still blurred after almost two years.

Nevertheless, it is pointed out by Barzegar (2012) that *“the future of the balance of power in the region will embrace the rivalry of two blocs of players: the regional 4+1 which comprises four active and major regional players including, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt plus Israel as a behind-the-scene player, which passively pursues its objectives through the channel of the United States”*.

The Arab Spring movement originated in Tunisia in December 2010 through Mohamed Bouazizi's reaction to the police confiscation by setting himself on fire and in an incredibly short period spread all over the Middle East and Northern Africa, especially Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Morocco. As stressed by defence correspondent of The Independent Kim Sengupta that 2011 was a year of division and doubt in the Middle East and North Africa after the regime changes and hopes for freedom and justice (Nashashib, 2012).

There were various factors behind the uprisings of masses. With the words of Freudenstein (2011: 68), *“the protests are a combination of demographic, socio-economic and political factors: an unprecedented number of young people*

*faced with stagnant, corrupt and repressive regimes, but also confronted with dismal prospects for their own economic future, decided to risk everything for the chance of the better”.*

Although it seems that there are too many different reasons, what is exactly triggering the others creating a domino effect is ‘economic deadlock’. It is very well-known that the economic problems of the societies living in the region have been a reality for the centuries. While the administrative level was becoming richer and powerful, the rest of the population was becoming poorer with every coming year. Besides the policies of the totalitarian regimes, there were some external factors in this deterioration process.

For instance, as it is pointed out by Hollis (2012), through the Barcelona Declaration, tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade were removed in manufactured goods and this process was improved in an incredibly short period, while the same improvement could not be observed in agricultural products which were the main export of the North African states except energy. So, this situation was not for the benefit of Mediterranean countries but it was the benefit of the European Union.

Moreover, Hollis adds that *“in terms of capital flows, the EMP did encourage investment in the MPCs, yet in the name of free market economics the MPCs were expected to open up their economies to European companies with the capacity to outperform local producers and so drive them out of business”* (Ibid.: 83). Besides the reasons, the implications of the Arab Spring on the regional countries and on general balance of power have also changed from one country to another according to the pre-uprising situation as well as the strength of the authority in the country.

After all the uprisings and big turmoil in the region, unfortunately, the general situation and shaken order does not seem easily recoverable after two years. The society in these countries has still giving unprecedented effort to provide what peoples expected at the beginning: 'democracy'.

*"Most countries in the Arab world have not jumped political tracks, and those that did begin to liberalize are now struggling to maintain order, lock in their gains, and continue moving forward"* (Jones, 2013: 55). In this general framework it is useful to make an overview on the situation of some of the regional countries during and after the first impact of the Arab Spring and to make an analysis regarding the effects of Turkey on their new systems and also the effects of the EU on them.

In Tunisia, President Zine al-Abidine Ali resigned in 2011 and went into exile. At the end of the same year, the first democratic parliamentary elections were held in which the moderate Islamist Ennahda party won in a landslide. *"Ennahda, which was banned under Ben Ali, says it has modeled itself on Turkey's governing AK Party"* (see BBC World News, Arab uprising: Country by country – Tunisia).

However, the protests in the country have not come to an end, yet. Protests against the economic situation and demonstrations by secularists against the government, which is criticised by being too Islamist (despite being in coalition with liberals), have been going on.

Meanwhile, accusations of the government by Salafis of not being Islamist enough have been still continuing and creating new turbulences in the country (Nashashib, 2012).

In Egypt Hosni Mubarak left the presidency in 2011. The elections were held in the same year and finalized with the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood which has been explicitly backed by the AKP government. In 2012 Mohammed Mursi was announced as the country's first freely elected president. But, unfortunately, *“first democratically elected president (...) caused national outrage and division by behaving blatantly undemocratically, though public pressure forced Mohamed Mursi to rescind his decree placing himself above the law sooner than he promised”* (Ibid.).

In the past, the Muslim Brotherhood faced oppression and now -being in power- it is likely to bring significant changes not only for Egypt itself but also for the rest of the Arab world (Turkone, 2012). Meanwhile, political and social life of Egypt suffers from growing polarization, and a number of ideological struggles divide the society, among the most important being those between Islamists and liberals, current government and opposition.

Compared to the other countries that experienced what is generally referred to as the Arab Spring, Egypt has made the most impressive progress so far. Even though the overall situation in the country does not live up to standard criteria of democratic governance yet and stability of the country has not been decisively established, the scope of changes that took place in Egypt after the fall of President Mubarak and after the victory of Islamist majority and Muslim Brotherhood has been enormous (Knell, 2012).

In international politics, Egypt has started to follow an active policy with all the regional and trans-regional players through engagement. In this context, it keeps close relations with Saudi Arabia and Qatar because of financial support,

with Iran and Turkey in order to achieve regional political stability, while interacting with the United States, Russia, and China in an attempt to maintain a major role in the regional balance of power (Barzegar, 2012).

In Libya Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown in 2011 and in the same year he was killed by the rebels. In order to protect civilians in the country, a resolution authorizing necessary measures was passed in the UN Security Council in March 2011. Moreover, a NATO-led operation was conducted in the country.

In July 2012, elections were held and the General National Congress came to power in August 2012. The general order and security have not been re-established, yet. One of the current terrifying examples of that was the killing of the US ambassador in Benghazi demonstrations in September 2012.

In Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh handed over the presidency to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who is expected to pursue the presidency until 2014 presidential elections. Although it looks like the political order has been provided in the country, there have been serious problems waiting for a solution such as poverty, shrinking oil reserves, water shortage, high unemployment, Al-Qaeda presence, tribal conflict, and a refugee influx from Somalia (Ibid.).

Violence has been still going on in the country and people are still suffering with the collapsed economy. Moreover, the country has been split to regions by different groups such as *“a Shiite rebellion in the north, a secessionist movement and an al Qaeda insurgency in the south, and powerful militias and tribes in the substantial territory”* (Jones, 2013).

In Syria the uprisings have started in March 2011. The President Bashar al-Assad, who has the power since 2000, has been still standing against the opposition group; even though he has been called to resign by Turkey and Jordan, and he has been imposed sanctions by the US and the EU. *“The opposition has come to control some isolated pockets of territory, particularly in the north-west of the country”* (see BBC World News, Arab uprising: Country by country – Syria).

Meanwhile, Syria’s membership in the Arab League has been suspended. Since the beginning of the uprisings in Syria more than 60.000 people was killed. It has been argued by Nashashib (2012) that it has been the most destabilizing one in the region, because it has been affecting its neighbors Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey.

Protests in Morocco started in February 2011 and pave the way for some constitutional changes in July 2011. Elections were held in November in the same year, and Justice and Development Party as a moderate Islamist party won the elections. Although protesters want a full constitutional monarchy, with more powers transferred from the king, they have been not powerful enough.

As it can be followed by the above mentioned general situations of some of the regional countries, yet, the consequences of this process for the long-term distribution of power within the region and for the patterns of alliances among the regional powers remain unclear. In fact, until now, stable state structures and admired democratic orders could not have been properly organized. The clear thing is that there is a growing evidence for emergence of some regional axes such as between Turkey and Egypt. And the Arab spring showed one more time that The Gulf States were feeling confident about having Western backing which

had been ensured by their oil and gas wealth, security agreements and weapons sales (Nashashib, 2012). However, they have also experienced the impacts of the unrest in their countries. The main reason behind that, above all the economic and demographic reasons there is also an unrest and division between Islamism demanding a powerful role in state structure, and the secular liberals demanding a clear separation of state structures from Islamic tendencies (Freudenstein, 2011).

Meanwhile, as a regional country Israel has also been affected by the Arab Spring because with the Arab Spring, it has found itself in an insecure atmosphere. For instance Hosni Mubarak as a leader having good relations with Israel has not been the authority in Egypt anymore, although the Muslim Brotherhood has followed a conciliatory approach so far related to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel (Moller, 2012). Moreover in also Syria there has been a possibility that a Muslim Brotherhood supported government might come to power in the future, which would not be in the interest of Israel, as it happened in Tunisia and Libya as well.

Notwithstanding, the Arab Spring might be a genuine opportunity if it can accomplish and successfully reach its real targets like democracy, respect for human rights and economic welfare. It may finish the violence that has destroyed millions of lives since the Second World War like the Iran-Iraq war or Arab-Israeli conflict or some others involving Western powers. Furthermore at the end of it the peace and democratic order may finally come to the region (De Vasconcelos, 2012).



#### **4. The Arab Spring and Its Multidimensional Repercussions to Turkey and to the EU**

While the uprisings have been still going on, beyond the regional players, international players have already started to seek to restrain threats and enhance their influences on the region. Since, none of the international actors may predict the long-term results of the events and their possible impacts on their society, on their economy and most importantly on their state security.

As pointed out by some scholars as Huntington “*when authoritarian regimes fall, they sometimes give way to other authoritarian regimes rather than to liberal ones. Despite the developments of the last two years, certain structural factors will continue to block the spread of democracy in the Middle East*” (Jones, 2013). In this context, international actors having direct links with the region like the European Union and regional actors having international significance like Turkey, has to elaborate the foreign policy decisions towards the region with further caution after the Arab Spring.

Taking into account this general situation, firstly, the impact of the Arab Spring on Turkey, and Turkey’s regional policy, as well as on its international reputation should be elaborated in a depth. Moreover, the contradictions and opportunities emerged for Turkey after the awakening in the Middle East and North Africa should be scrutinized in order to predict its probable effects on Turkey-EU relations. Secondly, the same impact should be analyzed related to the European Union and on its foreign policy. When the impacts of the Arab Spring on the EU’s relations with the regional countries are scrutinized, two different perspectives, ‘political’ and ‘economic’, come into prominence.

#### ***4.1. Turkey's Middle East Perception after the Arab Spring: the End of the Zero Problems with Neighbors Policy***

As for Turkey, the Arab Spring made a cold shower effect as stressed by Tocci (2012) particularly regards Turkey's foreign policy optimism symbolizing the end of 'the zero problems with neighbors' policy. The policies followed by Turkey were mostly criticized regarding the Arab Spring since it was argued to react to the uprisings in a different way than the Western powers.

For instance in Libya, Turkey opposed NATO's enforcement taking into account its commercial interests as an important commercial power whose well-being was largely depending on exports and therefore who had to be mindful of its commercial interests and investments (Barkey, 2011).

However, Turkey eventually signed onto NATO taking over command and control of the no-fly zone, because its initial hesitation triggered some events in Libya for example some anti-Turkish demonstrators burned the Turkish flag and tried to invade Turkish diplomatic consulate. Although it took longer time for Turkey to reconcile itself to follow similar policies especially with the European Union about Libya and Syria, it finally came together with the European Union and the NATO to support the anti-authoritarian uprisings at least in principle (Tocci, 2012).

Nevertheless, Turkey did not fully cooperate with UN-mandated efforts about Gaddafi such as freezing his assets (Barkey, 2011). According to Barkey (2011), tense situation between Turkey and Syria, as well as reactions from the West to Turkey's initial policy towards Libya have showed that during the Arab

Spring Turkey should understand that it is on her benefit to be at the same side with the West.

By contrast with Libya, Turkey supported the uprisings in Egypt since the beginning, because of the strategic rivalry in between Turkey and Egypt and also because of the absence of large Turkish investments in Egypt (Taspinar, Barkey, Soler i Lecha, Nafaa & Tocci, 2011). Additionally, after the victory of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Muhammed Mursi's term of presidency in the country, both countries are aware of the importance of a strategic partnership in order to reshape the regional order after the Arab Spring.

In doing so they need each other as both of them are the most significant and powerful countries having common strategic goals in the region especially against the bloodshed in Syria, the influence of oil nations in the Persian Gulf and future policies toward Israel, and so on. In this context, the new alliance emerging between Turkey and Egypt is of crucial importance as both of these countries have geostrategic significance in terms of the regions' security, stability and prosperity.

Only recently it was observed that Turkey-Syria tension on the Turkish border and political-economic problems in Egypt has brought these two countries together (Arango, 2012; Fleishman, 2012). In fact, the rapprochement between two countries gave signals also in 2011 when Egyptian soldiers were killed at the Israeli border and after the Israeli embassy in Cairo stormed by Egyptians.

Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan had visited Egypt in order to submit its support as a regional power whose citizens were also killed by Israeli soldiers on the Gaza flotilla previous year. Above all, Turkish public diplomacy has been

indeed followed precisely by the Egyptians especially by the Egyptian elite, since its influence on Egyptian people was enormous.

Meanwhile, Turkey has stated at almost every occasion its support to Muslim Brotherhood and President Mohammed Mursi. As an indicator of this support, several economic assistance agreements have already been signed, initiatives to relax the visa requirements have started, and joint naval exercises in the Mediterranean were conducted (Ibid.; Turkone, 2012).

Probably the biggest repercussion of the Arab Spring for Turkey and its regional policies has been related to Syria. As stressed by Alessandri & Altunişik (2013), with the crisis in Syria, the incidents of Arab Spring arrived at Turkey by posing direct threats to its security and raising policy challenges.

As a political response, the AKP government applied to the contact of the Muslim Brotherhood to facilitate political developments inside Syria in addition to the official talks in between Turkish and Syrian governments. Afterwards, Turkey had to impose an economic embargo, direct support for to the opposition, as well as threatening Assad by using military force against the regime.

Of course the shooting down of a Turkish jet by Syria in 2012 triggered the tense atmosphere in between the countries; nevertheless there was no immediate reaction against Syria from Turkish side afterwards not to escalate the already negative situation.

Meanwhile, a refugee camp was built in Turkey and according to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)'s April 2013 statistics 291.996 Syrian refugees have been staying in this camp (see UNHCR official web site, 2013).

In a nutshell, it should be stated that the Arab Spring has brought about a number of contradictions as well as opportunities for Turkey and its relations with the European Union. As for the opportunities, there is no doubt that Turkey is becoming ever more integrated with its neighbors and this approach empowers its influence in the Middle East.

Indeed, by seeing the positive role it has to play not only in the Middle East but also in Europe and Central Asia, Turkey is beginning to realize its full potential as a multiregional and increasingly powerful international actor (Walker, 2012). In terms of political geography, Turkey is incrementally taking a leading role and is consolidating its strong position in the region.

In a fact, the Middle East policy has always been a priority for Turkey in shaping its foreign policy. Especially during the presidency of Justice and Development Party, this priority has been converted into a strategy aiming and seeking to extend connections with neighboring countries, and moreover, to establish a regional axis. However, *“Ankara’s regional activism has backfired: from zero-problems with neighbors, we see neighbors’ problems spilling over into Turkey at an alarming rate”* (Tocci & Bechev, 2012: 2).

Thus, Turkey is trying to transform the situation in the Middle East in the interest of itself as much as possible by stressing its role and importance in the region as moderate Islam model and as a neighbor country looking for closer relations. As stated by Barkey (2011), reconstruction process of the Middle East will take a long time and will necessitate a new domestic, regional, and international political and economic infrastructure, which should be shaped by Turkey with the help of the West.

Owing to this, not surprisingly, the long-standing links with the US as an indispensable guarantor has been reinvested after a long-lasting divergence signals starting in 2003, but a similar rapprochement in relations with the EU has not been observed the blame of which, in large part, is at the Union's door (Tocci & Bechev, 2012).

#### **4.2. The European Union needs renovation in its Middle East Policy**

As explained in the previous chapters the Middle East and North Africa are the most important regions for the EU with their potential to create direct effect on the EU's well-being in terms of economy and security. As far as the close economic relations in between the EU and the Middle Eastern countries are concerned, it should worth to say that *“economic security is one of the important facets of the security for the EU since sustainable development, new and permanent markets and securing energy supplies are essential factors for economic security”* (Dagci, 2007).

Besides the general importance of the region, the importance of Turkey as one of the prominent countries has been increasing for the European Union day by day. Cichocki (2009) explains this increasing importance in a connection with the Lisbon Treaty.

The Treaty has created much more security oriented atmosphere, and argues that after the changes taking place at the structure of the Union, Turkey has been seen through the *“prism of a departure from the optimistic neoliberal paradigm of the 1990s, based on Western-centric propagation of economic and political norms, toward a more pessimistic and realistic geopolitical one”* (Ibid.).

Therefore, the EU has needed to redefine and reorganize its policy stance towards the region after the Arab Spring resulting from combination of demographic, economic and political factors.

Before the aforementioned events, the EU was encouraging cooperation with Arab rulers in order to ensure the regular supply of energy, to contain the spread of radical Islam, and to prevent illegal immigration (Stein, 2012). For instance, in the framework of its Mediterranean policies the EU had close relations with the western oriented Arab regimes provided that these regimes act as a bulwark against the rise of radical Islam and provide a measure of regional stability (Behr, 2012).

As a result of this, the Arab awakening forced the EU to assess the situation one more time from its existing foreign policy perceptions and come up with a new strategy. It also forced the EU to take some steps in coordination with the US, since it is argued by some scholars that there has been much to gain from cooperation both on the state level, and on the level of civil society (Freudenstein, 2011).

For the European Union democracy promotion had always been one of the main central policies towards the neighboring countries, therefore when the first uprisings were started and swiftly spread all over the Northern Africa and subsequently to the Middle East with the demand of democracy, freedom and justice, the EU had pretended as if 'Arab Spring' was legitimizing their policies (Hollis, 2012).

However, the EU could hardly follow policies precisely supporting democracy because its security and economic well being had been priority in its

foreign policy interests. Despite of its declarations, agreements and statements related to the Barcelona Process which were stressing the importance of democracy and respect for human rights, its democracy assistance accounted for less than 0.5 percent of all aid to the region, while over 200 times more money has been allocated to economic restructuring programs (Malmvig, 2006).

The EU was late to react to the events of the Arab Spring at the beginning. There were few members, who were reacting immediately such as France and Italy, but their reaction was stemming from the security concerns about the refugee flows, not from democratic or humanitarian reasons.

During this period, a concrete political stance was expected against the authoritarian regimes trying to find out ways to eliminate uprisings, but instead of this, the EU prepared some technical arrangements and renovated its Neighborhood Policy as a foreign policy attitude.

Due to the internal problems occurring simultaneously in the EU, the Union was mainly focusing on the Greek bailout, the potential collapse of the Schengen system, and so on (Lecha, 2011).

This position of the European Union was stated also by European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Štefan Füle in his conference speech about the Arab Spring in Munich on 3 February, 2012. Füle (2012) pointed out with the following words: *“Our policy in the region has not always been right. We have changed our approach and there is today much less tension between our interests and our values. However, we need a constant reality check as to whether our policies and instruments can respond to the historical challenges”*.



Additionally, just at the end of 2010, Treaty of Lisbon has come into force amending the two treaties forming the constitutional structure of the Union which are the Maastricht Treaty and the Treaty Establishing the European Community (TEC).

With the Treaty of Lisbon, two new posts have been created in the Union, which are the High Representative of the 'Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy' and the service working under this post 'European External Action Service (EEAS)'. By this way, the European Union would start to handle whole foreign affairs and security policy issues in coordination with and under control of these posts.

However, while these posts did not start to work properly and its manner of work did not completely clarified, protests against the economic crises arose and this evoked dissidence among the member states. Therefore, international society has one more time noticed that the European Union has not been so effective in foreign politics when the member states' interests are being the subject.

Moreover, interests of member states, particularly the ones belong to the powerful members like Germany, the UK or France, are leading the Union's foreign policy; not the Union itself. For example, depending on the financial connections at Egypt, for a long time these three countries did not want to actively involve in the events against Mubarek's regime, and in several occasions they declared their oppositions against the religious regimes or leaders.

Both national policy decisions and French President Nicholas Sarkozy's speeches about the Arab Spring, especially about Tunisia as being one of the old

colonies, at the beginning of the events in the region reflected this perspective (Küçükkeleş, 2013; Jeanjean, 2011). According to Jeanjean, *“Sarkozy’s regime and France lived in the ignorance of issues affecting the people and the political powers on the other side of the Mediterranean. France did not understand what was happening because of the close ties existing between French regime and North African dictatorship”* (Jeanjean, 2011).

Even if a bit late, the European Union responded to the Arab Spring through a series of different ways including in official visits, humanitarian aids, sanctions on migration, new initiatives improving neighborhood relations, and so on (Balfour, 2012). During the programming and implementation processes of the responses there was a close cooperation and collaboration with the African Union and the Arab League.

Mainly the EU’s revised policies about the southern neighborhood has focused around four titles which are *“refined conditionality, greater differentiation among countries, new tools to support democracy-building, and a stronger focus on sustainable socio-economic development”* (Ibid.).

Of course the first and most discussed EU response was related to military intervention in Libya because of either belated decision about it or division among the members as also observed in the case of invasion of Iraq.

European participation in the military initiative in Libya can be summarized like that; France, the UK, Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Norway joined the bombing group, while the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden flew fighter patrols; and as for Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, they provided a naval presence (Witney & Dworkin, 2012).

#### **4.2.1. Political Perspective: ‘EU Development Cooperation’**

The main foreign policy response of the European Union towards the Arab Spring was in the framework of its development cooperation policy. As one of the most well-known and active policy areas of the EU, it has been comprehensively discussed since the beginning of the Arab revolutionary wave.

From the EU's Neighborhood Policy perspective, it provides a unique platform that facilitates mutual understanding and political dialogue in order to reduce tensions, whereas from the financial perspective it serves for the development of infrastructure network connections, regional economic integration, and protection of the environment and the establishment of a free trade zone.

In the framework of the first responses of the EU to the Arab Spring, according to the European Commission's data, EUR 80.5 million in total was allocated to the region which covers emergency decision, humanitarian implementations, and evacuation of third country nationals (see European Commission official web site, 2011).

The first official response was the declaration of a joint communication named ‘A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean’ on 8 March, 2011. The general aim of the communication was to support the countries in the Southern Mediterranean who were making political and economic reforms, and to contribute them towards increasing human rights and freedoms. In this context, as the first step, EUR 30 million was made available for humanitarian aid by the Commission especially for the urgent situations in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

On 25 May, 2011 the EU declared another joint communication named as 'A new response to a changing Neighborhood'. With this document, the EU declared that the more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU in various forms, including increased funding for social and economic development, larger programs for comprehensive institution-building, greater market access, and increased financing support for investments (see European Commission official web site, 2011).

Depending on the necessity of a strong civil society in creating 'deep democracy', the European Union has given special attention to the role of civil society in international politics. In this framework a Civil Society Facility was established including social media development. Additionally, Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) and political movements have gained much more importance than before in the eyes of the EU bureaucrats (Balfour, 2012).

In the following process, within the scope of 'A new response to a changing Neighborhood', in September 2011 a new program was adopted by the European Commission, the name of which was 'Support for Partnership, Reforms and Inclusive Growth (SPRING)'. In the framework of this program it has been decided to provide support for the Southern Neighborhood countries regarding democratic transformation, institution building and economic growth through institution building programs.

Besides, they have been contributed for integrated socio-economic reform, strengthened labor market institutions, promoted labor market, capacity building activities, and pilot programs which were modeled on the EU cohesion and rural development policies (Karana, 2012).

The total value of the initiative was EUR 350 million to cover the years 2011 and 2012 (see European Commission official web site, 2011). According to the program, the EU member states have to be involved in the preparation of initiatives supporting them through their embassies and aid agencies that are active in partner countries.

The Erasmus Mundus Program can be another further step for the neighboring countries in the region in order to improve relations, which has adopted in September 2011. With the program it was planned to create opportunities for student and academic staff mobility although there is still fear in Europe of immigration from the South.

Almost all the new initiatives breaking new grounds to European Neighborhood Policy have anticipated close consultation and observation of the countries in the Middle East and Southern Mediterranean in order to follow the improvement process. However neither of the initiatives suggests any concrete plan concerning the content of the application and evaluation (Karana, 2012).

On the other hand, as stressed by Schumacher (2011), European Neighborhood Policy was hardly attractive for the authoritarian regimes of the region to make changes in their political systems and today after the Arab Spring nothing has changed that much, even though the intentions are also clearly the same from both sides which are that for the African countries they are money and market access in Europe; as for the Europeans they are stability and prosperity in Africa.

In fact, *“the revision of the ENP was already decided in the second half of 2010’, for instance, ‘at a time when the EU and the regime of Tunisian President*

*Ben Ali were in the final phase of bilateral negotiations to award Tunisia ‘advanced status’, and Arab rebellion wasn’t even a theoretical consideration among planning staff in the Brussels institutions” (Schumacher, 2012).* It can be even said that the new initiatives about revising the ENP was not planned exactly for giving a response to the Arab Spring, at least at the beginning (Karana, 2012).

However, there are still possibilities and hopes to provide assistance to the regional countries after the Arab Spring as much as possible. Freudenstein (2011) has argued that especially the EU member states in Central and Eastern European countries can play an important role to lead the EU in its assistance policy towards the Arab Spring, because these countries had already experienced a transition from dictatorship to democracy, and from central planning to market economy.

#### **4.2.2. Economic perspective: ‘The EU and the MENA’**

The economic relations with the European Union have a crucial importance for the Middle East and Northern African (MENA) countries, because more than fifty percent of their trade has been plied with the EU (Knoops, 2011). From the EU’s perspective this close connection has been taken as an advantage in terms of political security and energy security (mainly oil). Since, any political or economic unrest in this region can pave the way for fluctuations in prices of crude oil on the world markets as happened during the Iranian revolution (1979) and Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait (1990).

In this context, after the Arab Spring, economic relations between the EU and MENA region have been attracted much more attention. However, there has

been another curial issue taking attention at the same time which is the financial problems of the European Union and its seeking to find a solution for this after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force.

Nevertheless, the EU has diversified its rescue packages and new initiatives mentioned under the European Neighborhood Cooperation section. However, through these policies it has been difficult to accomplish progress in trade anyway, as one of the main pillars of economic development in MENA region.

In fact, the EU has mostly criticized because of its confusing democracy promotion, its relations with traditional parts of civil society, few social investment projects on market liberalization, and also insufficient trade-openings and regulatory adjustments (Fabry, 2013).

Before helping to the recovery of the regional economies, the EU has been offering new incentives to the MENA countries such as mobility partnerships, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) and so on. And even for these initiatives it has laid down some pre-conditions (Witney & Dworkin, 2012). Moreover, the leverage of these initiatives are challenged by the influence of new actors in the region like the Gulf countries or China (Fabry, 2013)

The main reason behind this situation is explained by Kirişci (2012) that the EU represents a considerable resistance to opening its internal market to agricultural products from the region while continuing to import energy related products. This trade volume is mostly prolonged between the EU and Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia or Libya.

Kirişci also emphasizes that especially the Mashreq countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Egypt) have large trade deficits with the EU, because *“these countries have imported much more from the EU compared to what they have been able to export in the absence of oil and natural gas exports”*.

When the main drivers of the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa are considered, socio-economic development factor is coming into prominence. This means that in the region, for a successful transformation, the EU and regional countries will need to find solutions together, firstly, for the poverty and unemployment. Especially the European Union will need to add new dimensions to its foreign policy towards the MENA region in terms of economic relations.

Although it does not seem realistic today, according to some scholars it might be expected the EU to offer the MENA countries, who are meeting necessary conditions in terms of relevant EU law, full accession to the EU single market by 2030.

According to the analyses of Sapir & Zachmann (2012: 45-46); *“This would entail the progressive elimination of all barriers to the free circulation of goods, services, capital, and labor. (...) It would also include access to specific transfer mechanisms designed to foster and offset costs of economic, social, and environmental convergence. (...) If successful, the process would imply that, by 2030, Europe and the Mediterranean countries would constitute a vast Euro-Med Economic Area (EMEA) similar to the present European Economic Area (EEA) that links the EU to Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein”*.



However, in order to carry out this foreign policy goal EU member states have to be willing and have to attempt for it. Balfour (2012: 31) mentions the calls, at the beginning of the uprisings, seeking for a *“Marshall Plan for North Africa and the Middle East, and for breaking down trade protectionism, coupled with a race to get visibility in the region and at home through official visits to the uprising countries”*.

Unfortunately she tells that none of those calls have been materialized and no initiative has been presented by the member states to take any further step related to the situation in the region.

## **5. Implications of the Arab Spring on EU-Turkey Relations: ‘Cooperation or Competition’?**

As explained with the causes and results in the previous chapters, the Arab Spring has forced the European Union and Turkey to update their approaches and policies to properly respond to the improvements of the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Although they had reacted similar to each other with a concern and doubt at the beginning of the uprisings and they had been reluctant to lose their rooted relations with the dictators of the old regimes, in the end they found themselves in a need to reconstruct their relations and come closer while regenerating their ties with the neighboring countries.

Security and stability have been the central necessities for the European Union since the foundation of the Union, although this main concern has changed its focus from the Soviet Union with the end of the Cold War towards the Middle East. In this context, promoting democracy and stimulating stability in the Middle East, with which the EU has close commercial and socio-cultural interactions, have crucial importance for the EU (Kirisici, 2011).

For all these aims, the European Union needs to understand more precisely the current trends of Islamic movements and to be more innovative when engaging with them, their varying channels of communication and cooperation in neighbors' civil societies (Fabry, 2013). Therefore, as a Muslim country located in the region for centuries, Turkey might be needed as a role model and cooperation partner.

As explained in the previous chapters, there is a mutual interdependence in between Turkey and the EU in terms of national or supranational interests emerging from the Middle East. Thus, Turkey's foreign policy decisions have been influenced by the relations with the European Union, while the European Union has been taking its decisions about Turkey also according to its own interests depending on the Middle East in which Turkey has located.

As stated by Walker (2007); *"Turkey has historically prioritized its relationship with Europe; however the attractiveness of Turkish membership in the EU is undoubtedly linked to the constructive role it can play in its own near-abroad"*. Therefore, between 2009 and 2011, some scholars' arguments on Turkey's 'change of axis' and its 'drift to the East' took the first seat in internal and international agenda of the EU.

When the Arab Spring occurred at the end of 2010, the dynamics of relations between Turkey and its transatlantic partners, particularly the EU have changed once again in order to adequately respond to the specific needs of the new context, and feasibility of acting together in the Arab world has hit the top (Tocci, 2012; Lecha, 2011).

In a similar vein to the European Union, Turkey had prolonged close relations with the old regimes of the Arab world until the Arab Spring without paying attention their un-democratic state structures. When the revolts started Turkey realized that it was confronted with the same dilemma faced by the European Union as being another promoter of democracy in the Middle East.

Thus similar to the EU, Turkey also preferred a pragmatic approach focusing on the amelioration of national interests such as cultivation of economic

ties and the expansion of political dialogue through diplomacy (Alessandri & Altunışık, 2013).

With this understanding, according to some scholars both Turkey and the EU shared common features while reacting to the events in the Middle East, because both of them lost their credibility due to the support they had provided for authoritarian regimes before the Arab Spring (France towards Tunisia and Libya, Turkey towards Syria and Libya), and both of them have demanded to keep their influential role in the region (Lecha, 2011).

In terms of providing security for the Mediterranean region, and in a roundabout way for the Europe in general, Turkey-EU rapprochement has also been important, because without this, as emphasized by Lecha (Ibid.) launching a mission in the framework of its Common Security and Defense Policy with using NATO military capabilities in the region or beyond will stay blocked for the EU by Turkey due to Cyprus issue.

Energy dependency and its security has been also determinant in Turkey-EU relations. For the last couple of years, there has been a growing effort in the European Union to diversify its supply of energy (which is mainly depended on Russia) (Souleimanov & Kraus, 2012). Simultaneously, there has been emerging energy cooperation in between Turkey and Iran regarding the transit of Iranian natural gas to the West.

This energy cooperation is conducted in addition to Turkey's already established bounds with the neighbor countries providing more than half of the crude oil and natural gas supply of the world. Therefore, in the near future, most probably there will be new energy connections among the European Union and

the Middle East, and the lines of these connections will highly likely pass through Turkey.

Natural resources and energy supply have always been a crucial factor for national or supranational interests, however, today, this decisiveness is much more important than before. Because, the Middle East and North Africa as the main regions of energy supplies of the globe have been experiencing an uprising and struggling to reemerge its regional order and stability.

Thus it is difficult to predict the future success of these energy connections in advance. Therefore, the European Union is in a far more need to keep its relations with Turkey vibrant, and it has to take the Arab Spring as an advantage to improve its relations with both Turkey and other regional countries.

Turkey's and the EU's current approaches to the Middle East has often been described as a form of soft power but still there are some main divergences or differences between their positions and their powers in the region.

For instance, as summarized by Schmid (2011: 4), Turkey is an active economic power in the region relying on the solid nexus of interests between Turkish businessmen and the new political AKP elites and while materializing these interests "Turkey has taken advantage of the relative backwardness of Arab economies to make itself indispensable through the exportation of much needed goods, and proposed a free circulation integration model gravitating around its own territory".

But the EU's contribution to economic development is like a public donor, and also a producer of commercial norms (Ibid.). Moreover the EU does not allow

people from the region for free circulation in its borders while Turkey prefers to eliminate visa requirements from these regional countries in addition to the growing economic ties with them. After the Arab Spring the same attitude has been still followed by Turkey and the EU, with much more attention and doubts in the EU's side stemming from the possible flows of migrants from the region.

Although close cooperation between the EU and Turkey in dealing with the challenges of the Arab uprisings have not been observed yet, there are some improvements in bilateral relations between Turkey and some EU member countries, particularly Great Britain and France related to the Syrian crisis, for instance.

In the United Nations Security Council resolutions related to violence in Syria, Turkey and France took the same side as active members of an international diplomatic effort that aimed to bypass the Russian and Chinese vetoes about Syria and they kept up pressure on Syria to comply with international demands to end violence against protests (Alessandri & Altunışik, 2013; Black, 2011).

As a consequence, it should be stated that it is difficult to make exact judgments about the final situation of relations under the shade of Arab Spring and it is difficult to show concrete examples of agreement or disagreement between Turkey and the European Union in their Middle East policies. However, there is no doubt that both sides have faced with challenging outcomes.

Although their responses to the "Arab Spring" have been based on the general idea that the transformation of the Arab world is leading to more democratization; when it comes to their interest, both have had difficulties in

understanding the complexities and specificities of this transformation (Alessandri & Altunışık, 2013).

Taking into account the intimate relationship that Turkey and Arab countries had in the recent past, it will not be wrong to state that there has been a pressure on Turkey much more than the EU since the beginning of the uprisings to react the events officially as a rising power and a facilitator to solve the crises in the region (Schmid, 2011).

## Conclusion

In the light of all these events and changing foreign policy perceptions and tense relations, the proper answer to the basic question of this research 'how EU-Turkey relations will be effected' is still remaining as a main concern, due to the fact that Arab Spring started at a time when Turkey's relations with the European Union was going through a turbulence.

Although there are so many scholars who have affirmative expectations (such as Alessandri & Altunişik, 2013; Fabry, 2013; Behr, 2012; Barkey, 2011; Freudenstein, 2011; Jenkins, 2011; Taspinar, Barkey, Soler i Lecha, Nafaa, & Tocci, 2011) from the Arab Spring for the EU-Turkey relations, after two years nothing has clearly changed.

Today, from the EU's perspective, it seems that it is significant to provide better governance and democratization in the Arab world so as not only to preserve economic bounds with the region but also to protect itself from the most probable negative repercussions of unsecure environment of the region (Moller, 2012; Freudenstein, 2011). Therefore, sustaining close contact and cooperation with Turkey as a model of 'moderate' Islam is very important (Barkey, 2011).

In this case, this time another question is coming to mind which is whether Turkey is a real role model in the eyes of regional countries which would positively affect the EU to keep closer ties with Turkey in the near future after the Arab Spring. In this framework, a study conducted by TESEV (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation) in 2011 in order to understand the perception of Turkey in the Middle East is giving very interesting feedbacks shedding light to



some questions about not only aforementioned issue but also some others emerging from the region (Akgün & Senyücel Gündoğar, 2012).

The study is conducted as a survey in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, the Gulf countries (Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the UAE), Yemen and Libya.

According to the survey, economic situation is seen as the most urgent issue of these countries, while the uprisings in the region in general is evaluated as the second most important issue. As for the third most important issue, people, who are attending the survey, are designating the Western influence/presence, whereas the previous years' mostly preferred issue 'the Israeli-Palestinian issue' is lagging behind in the row.

About the regional security, according to the study Turkey is seen as the country that is playing the most positive role being to a great and moderate extent, and the responses of respondents regarding the same issue are not so negative even in Syria. About the impact of European Union on regional security and peace is also seen positive in general except Syria, Iran and Iraq.

Meanwhile, Turkey's response to the Arab Spring in the first months has a positive impact on respondents according to the study, although in general evaluation of Turkey's stance, there are some clear differences than the previous years, such as while in 2010 the most favorable view of Turkey in the region was belong to Syria, in 2011 there is a sharp decrease in this percentage in not only Syria but also in Iran. But on the contrary, there is an increase in positive attitudes towards Turkey in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Similarly, in the results of the survey, there is an obvious support for Turkey to play a greater role in the region and to mediate in the regional conflicts like Israeli-Palestinian issue. Finally to our main question whether Turkey is a model for the region or not, 61% of respondents are giving a positive response, because of its democratic system, growing economy, Muslim background and secular system.

One more issue is worth to be mentioned here from the survey which is the regional opinions about Turkey's EU membership. In this issue, more than half of the respondents are giving positive feedbacks, most of which are coming from Libya and Egypt. From the other way around 60% of respondents are saying that Turkish accession would have a positive effect on the EU's role in the region.

Özerdem (2011) is also mentioning these Arab opinions related to Turkey, its role and its relations with the West in one of her papers related to Turkey's role as a bridge between the Middle East and Europe. In her paper she is referring to the analyses of Hasan Kanbolat, who is the Director of Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies, and pointing out his opinions that neighboring countries are seeing Turkey as a European country and culturally they feel Turkey close to themselves but at the same time, close to Europe. So if Turkey becomes closer to Europe this means the Middle East becomes closer to Turkey.

Similar results can also be seen in 2011 Euromed Survey related to the Arab Spring with some slight differences. In this survey, according to 695 actors and experts, two actors receive an average score of more than 5 who are Turkey (5.9) and the European Union (5.4) in terms of their reactions to the uprisings.

However, according to the same survey respondents expect a lesser impact of the EU and Turkey in the region in the future (Aragall & Padilla, 2012).

The influence, which is given to Turkey, changes depending on the respondents' countries. For instance the lowest ratings of respondents are observed in the Maghreb. 56% of respondents in Maghreb countries believe that the EU will have more influence in the region in the coming days, while respondents from the Mashreq and Turks themselves placed it on a level with the EU (Ibid.) with a contrast like 57% of respondents from Mediterranean EU countries' belief that Turkey will have more influence than the EU.

As from Turkey's perspective, Turkey is of course not so strong and powerful enough to respond all the regional, military and economic requirements in the region by itself although it argues the opposite from time to time. Moreover, it is much more difficult than ever today to follow Monroe's isolation doctrine especially for a country located at the very center of the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Mediterranean. In fact, it is much more difficult to follow a single acting policy reflecting eastward or westward tendencies only.

Additionally, the awakening is triggering a shift in regional balance of power, which is basically urging Turkey to analyze and rearrange its foreign policy in the region as well (Barkey, 2011), no matter how positive its reputation among the regional societies. In this context, in order to respond to the requirements of the new political situation in the Arab world adequately, as pointed out by the existing literature, Turkish foreign policy has to be modified together with the European policies, which is expected also by the regional societies as observed in the above mentioned study.

As an integral part of its existence, Turkey has traditionally put “Europe” at the very centre of its policies both internally and externally as an entity, an identity, and as the set of common values since the foundation of the republic. The ninety years-old history of this prioritization has been prolonged with up and downs and with pros and cons. During these years, this pro-Western/pro-European attitude has gained official character through the steps taken mutually by Turkey and the European Union with the membership bid.

It is a very well-known fact that this process has created a unique interdependence in between Turkey and the European Union no matter how big the frustration of Turkey stemming from the recent stagnation in relations and the fear of Europe stemming from Turkey’s eastward refocus.

Today, almost all the scholars are agree on Turkey’s role as an important partner in terms of economy as well as security as explained in depth in the previous chapters, even though this significance has usually been elaborated in its own reality. From the Turkish perspective, it might seem that it is necessary to keep better connection with the East due to the security and stability concerns, in addition to the rapidly growing Turkish economy requiring the energy resources of the East.

However, it has also to be accepted that Turkey will anyway be in a need for the West, particularly for the European Union, as a stabilizing factor for the domestic changing process in the Middle East and North Africa, too, firstly in terms of international support, strong recognition and as well as modern technology to use. On the other hand it has to take the advantage of Eastern resources and markets to offer Turkish products worldwide (Cichocki, 2009).

Above all, it should be accepted that Turkey is changing, but the European Union is changing, too, either politically or financially. Nevertheless, the foreign policy perceptions towards the common neighborhood of Turkey and the European Union are becoming convergent day by day. As long as the international politics and political events occurring in this neighborhood make a common stance necessary in order to provide security and stability, this convergence will continue.

The Arab Spring has been the last but not the least example of this convergence, although it is still impossible to mention an exact common attitude towards the Middle East and North Africa as being one of the main common neighborhoods depending on close bilateral relations, negotiation and collaboration.

Almost in every paper written about the Arab Spring, or every research analyzing the repercussions of the Arab Spring on Turkey-EU relations, the Middle Eastern policies have been mentioning as the potential of cooperation between these actors, but unfortunately none of them have been able to predict any political initiative because of the absence of effective permanent channels of dialogs, as well as quick change of state policies in the European Union and also in Turkey.

Exceptionally, some scholars like Alessandri and Altunışık (2013) have suggested the EU to accept to work more closely with Turkey in the region, by pursuing common diplomatic initiatives while developing joint concrete projects on the ground. They have also added that “(...) *thanks to its historical legacies, cultural affinities, and growing economic ties with many of the region’s players both in the Levant, Gulf and North Africa, Turkey could help the EU develop a*

*common vision of a global Mediterranean, ever more connected to neighboring regions, in which the EU's and Turkey's influence would be measured not so much in terms of alignment of these regions with the European (or Turkish) space, but with the ability to protect the interests and values that both Turkey and the EU share, from economic openness to political development, despite the growing diversity and multipolarity of the region" (Ibid.: 8).*

The supporters of Turkey's membership to the European Union have been also strongly continuing to argue that this partnership can provide strategic benefits for both sides. *"Outside the EU, Turkey will be increasingly induced to 'go it alone' in terms of both its domestic development and foreign policy, which would hollow out the strategic assets embedded in any EU-Turkish foreign policy cooperation. It is only if such an argument is made persuasively that Turkey's neighborhood policy would represent a net asset in the pursuit of Turkey's accession to the EU" (Tocci, 2011: 80).*

Similarly, Nykänen (2011) argues that it is thought that Turkey's membership to the European Union will be a logical end result and it will be the benefit of the EU, unless they follow diverging policies in the Middle East. He thinks that an opposite situation may create further problems among the European Union member countries.

Beyond the foreign policy and security oriented opportunities that will be gained by both sides, *"Turkey's strong and growing economy offers a large and important market for European goods and services even as Turkey's economy turns more to the greater Middle East. Turkish businesses are flourishing in parts of Europe and Turkey has become a magnate for foreign direct investment with*

*much of that flowing from Europe. Turkey's role as an important energy hub and transit region for European energy security continues to grow" (Morelli, 2013: 13).*

Another point of view stated by Jenkins (2011: 16) that *"in a world increasingly driven by what the late Samuel Huntington described as "civilizational" divides, Turkey's cultural ambidexterity – its strong sense of Muslim identity and its long history of close political, economic and societal ties with the West – means that it does genuinely offer the EU something that no other member or candidate can provide".*

These and slightly different or similar opinions were always put forward in the past whenever Turkey's membership to the European Union was in the agenda. But, it had never been discussed that much deeply before the Arab Spring, and it had never become that much significant before when the Middle East was the main subject. It is because of the general alteration in the Middle East and North Africa, and also of the particular alterations in each country and in their regimes.

However, although it has been argued by some that the Arab Spring will serve to the benefit of supporter group by creating a rapprochement between Turkey and the EU through opening the ways going to the membership blocked by France and Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus; the findings of this research does not submit too much positive results at least for the near future, until a concrete step will be taken by the EU.

The European Union should realize that despite the interdependence between Turkey and the European Union, if the relations between Turkey and the EU related to Turkey's membership continue to deteriorate, Turkey will certainly

turn its face to the other directions and will go its own way (Taspinar, 2011), depending on the Turkish societal alterations. And this final situation might not be for the benefit of the EU, especially when the existing political and financial discomfiture in the EU is concerned.

As emphasized by Lehne (2011), in this period, particularly after the Treaty of Lisbon the European Union and its new institution European External Action Service needs a strong leadership in order to take more strong decisions and to set priorities through modernizing its dialogue with the international partners like Turkey.

Indeed, the positive end result of mutual cooperation has also depended on Turkey's responsibility. Although it seems that the importance of the EU has lost its credibility in Turkey and the self-confident AKP government now tends to underestimate the positive value of its engagement with the EU for its Middle East policy; Turkey is aware of gains that the rapprochement with the EU would provide.

They can be summarized as *"institutionalized instruments to deal with some of the most pressing regional challenges, from economic development to political transitions, which call for financial instruments, multilateral initiatives, and standardized procedures"* (Alessandri & Altunişik, 2013: 8). Thus, it will most probably not totally depart from the EU path in the following years.

Meanwhile, taking into account the last events and increased tension between Turkey on one side and Syria and Israel on the other side, it should be stated that a strengthening partnership between Turkey and Egypt, underpinning a



new order in the region, will most probably bring about new dynamics into the Middle East.

Thus it is understandable that the countries like Syria, Israel, and Iran in the region are looking upon the potential Turkish-Egyptian axis with an alarm; mainly because whereas only a short time ago these two countries were looking at each other with skepticism and suspicion, today they are progressing on a regional strategic partnership (Shadid, 2011).

For instance, as expected and actually observed during the first two years of the events in the Arab world, the Turkey-Egypt axis represents the most important aspect of the general trend wherein they try to alter and end the Israel's military operations in Gaza (Turkone, 2012).

Now not only the regional powers but also all international actors have to re-evaluate their foreign policy perspectives towards the region, because of the fact that the general order established by the former authoritative regimes has been changing, and instead of these regimes, political Islamic figures are coming to the administrative level like Muslim Brotherhood.

In this atmosphere Turkey is seen as *“a successful combination of a conservative traditional Islamic society with a modern economy open to the outside world and democratic institutions”* (Fabry, 2013). And so, the European Union needs to share both this positive attitude and also Turkey's expertise of the region.

But, on the other hand, Turkey is losing its credibility in some countries as well such as Iran which is the most powerful regional country with its nuclear

capabilities. And also when the internal turmoil and domestic evolutions are concerned it would not be wrong to say that it is not in a position to bring about a successful modernization and democratization of the Arab world by itself and requires active support from the West. *“The Arab spring is thus sending Turkey back towards the Western sphere”* (Ibid.).

Taking into consideration of the general circumstances in the Turkey-EU-Middle East triangle, it can be said as a consequence that Turkey-EU relations cannot be analyzed without taking deeply into account the common interests, common threats and common expectations from the international relations. In this context, the Arab Spring has brought about both challenges and opportunities for Turkey and for the European Union.

It has revealed the weaknesses of these international actors while requiring further intensified and comprehensive foreign policy tools in order to eliminate shared problems in the shared neighborhood.

There is no doubt that the fifty years old European Union membership voyage of Turkey does not seem to be ended affirmatively just because of the uprisings dramatically shaking the Middle East and North Africa. However, seeking for comprehensive strategic cooperation in the common neighborhood, and the necessity of compensating each other's weaknesses for the same foreign policy goal has created a rapprochement in between Turkey and the European Union.

The repercussions of this rapprochement have not been reflected to Turkey's membership negotiation process yet, however, because of the fact that the foreign bilateral relations of these two international actors have been based on a structure which is built on a much more strong mutual-interdependence than

just a 'membership' relations. Even though there have been some differences as mentioned in the previous chapters related to their Middle East policies in general, and their policies after the Arab Spring in particular; their foreign policy stance towards the Middle East and North Africa cannot be evaluated as a complete divergence.

As a conclusion, if we look back at the hypotheses of this research, first of all, we can easily confirm that Turkey's changing active Middle East policy, especially after the AKP's presidency led to a significant rapprochement between Turkey and the regional countries such as Libya, Syria, and/or Egypt. And this rapprochement has been going on even after the Arab Spring with some slight obstacles except Syria.

As it is argued by the second hypothesis, Turkey's voice is much higher than before in the negotiations with the European Union depending on Turkey's good neighborly relations in addition to the economic relations with the countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey has never had that strong self confidence before this period.

By taking into account the surveys mentioned above and also general existing situation in international politics of the EU, for the third hypothesis it can be state that Turkey's new foreign policy decisions and rapprochement with the Middle East has for sure affected the perception of the European Union about Turkey. Particularly, when the Arab Spring is concerned, it is obvious that it has created a positive rapprochement from the EU's side to Turkey's support and contribution in the process of providing peace, democracy, and stability in the region.

The repercussions of regional disorder and prolonging conflicts in the MENA region is not for the benefit of the EU, but on the contrary it might pave the way for uncontrollable migration and Islamist movements in its own borders which are not moderate.

However, it should also be stated that the last hypothesis has not clearly been justified yet. Because the Arab Spring has also created some negative situations for Turkey in addition to the positive ones such as the difficulties and obstacles for providing neutrality, good-neighborly relations with all neighbor countries, and soft power perceptions of Turkey. For instance, deteriorating relations with Iran and Syria are direct effects of the Arab Spring on Turkey which might cause a decrease in Turkey's growing reputation, power and voice in the international platforms.

Without a doubt, it has also been affecting Turkey's relations with the European Union, since the growing security concerns in the country has also postponed the democratization and westernization process of Turkey in the framework of the EU-membership negotiation requirements. These security concerns have also triggered some reflections in the EU which have been already argued that Turkey's membership in the EU might cause a security gap for Europe because of Turkey's problematic neighborhood.

Nevertheless, the affirmative outcomes of both Turkey's Middle East policy and Arab Spring-Turkey-EU triangle seem to be militating against a divergence between Turkey and the EU, based on the expectations particularly emerging from the MENA region regarding Turkey's EU membership and good neighborly relations through Turkey between MENA countries and the EU.

Of course this perception has reflected European, Middle Eastern and in a limited proportion Turkish side. When the AKP's side is concerned (not completely of whole Turkish citizens, since it is difficult to accept that AKP has represented all citizens' point of views), it is quite ambiguous to predict the course of Turkey-EU relations depending on the Arab Spring because of their every day changing domestic and foreign policy attitudes as mentioned in the previous chapters, although the general situation of international relations requires a rational and cooperative stance against the incidents occurring in the Middle East.

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